



# **An Investigation into Personal Tutoring: Staff Perceptions**

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# **Abstract**

Due to the changing landscape of Higher Education (HE), increased tuition fees, widening participation and a new regulatory framework for the sector – the Office for Students (OfS), and the launch of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) - Personal Tutoring has become increasingly important in HE in the United Kingdom (UK). It is fundamental to the student experience (Lochtie, McIntosh, Stork and Walker, 2018). Indeed, Personal Tutoring has been identified as an effective way to improve student success in HE (Thomas, 2018). It aims to improve the student experience and to improve retention and progression.

This study explores the perceptions of Personal Academic Tutors at a traditional Russell Group university, in engineering as a discipline. The review of literature focuses on the history of Personal Tutoring, the role of the Personal Tutor, models of Personal Tutoring, professional development for Personal Tutors, and reward and recognition for the role. In addition, these areas are explored through the research questions. For the purpose of this study, Personal Tutoring is broadly defined as activities where staff work in partnership with students to provide support, advice and guidance.

The overall research frame is a case study and the ontological approach for the interviews is phenomenology, this research design was selected to find out the lived experiences and perceptions of Personal Tutors. For the phenomenological study, interviews were conducted with six Personal Tutors. I chose interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as the methodological approach. Other sources of data were collected as part of the case study approach.

The findings suggest that there is a need for Personal Tutors to have an understanding of the Personal Tutor role as well as the information required to do the role and professional development and training. In addition, the findings demonstrate that Personal Tutors want to be rewarded and receive recognition for the role. My research concludes with recommendations that make an original contribution to the theory, knowledge, and practice of Personal Tutoring. I recommend a model which suggests how HE institutions could better support Personal Tutors in HE.

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## Acronyms

BERA	British Education Research Association
EBSCO	Elton B. Stephens Company
HEFi	Higher Education Futures Institute
PAT	Personal Academic Tutor
UKAT	United Kingdom Advising and Tutoring Association

## Abbreviations

ADP	Academic Development Partner
BEd	Bachelor of Education
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Academy
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
OfS	Office for Students
PDR	Personal Development Review
PGCHE	Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
TA	Thematic Analysis
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States

# Introduction

This research arises from personal experience of Personal Tutoring across three Higher Education (HE) institutions as a Personal Tutor and Educational Developer supporting staff in teaching and learning. Throughout this thesis, the terms Personal Tutor, Academic Advisor, Personal Academic Tutor and Tutors, will be used interchangeably to mean the same role, as will students and tutees. This is due to the literature and participants using these terms. This chapter outlines the importance of Personal Tutoring, my professional and personal context, as well as the research focus and rationale for my research. It also provides the research aims and a brief overview of each chapter.

As an Educational Developer and an individual who cares about the student experience, I believe that Personal Tutoring really makes a difference. My interest and passion for Personal Tutoring stems from my own experiences as a Personal Tutor at one HE institution and as an Educational Developer at two HE institutions. I have experienced challenges as a Personal Tutor, and observed colleagues facing challenges, this has resulted in the role being difficult at times. It is these challenges that led to the need for my research. For example, I never received any development or training for the role of the Personal Tutor, I have found that there is inconsistency in support for Personal Tutors in HE and that Personal Tutors are unsure of the role and that there are inconsistencies in how staff carry out the role. In my previous institution staff development for Personal Tutors was mandatory; when I started at my current institution there was no staff development for Personal Tutors. I wanted to find out about differences in practice and give Personal Tutors a voice. In my experience, I have also found that there is a lack of reward and recognition for the Personal Tutor role. Therefore, in my research I decided to find out about tutors' perspectives and experiences of Personal Tutoring and explore how an HE institution supports Personal Tutors to carry out the role. In doing this I hoped to gain a better understanding of how institutions could better support Personal Tutors in the future, so that tutors feel they can do the role well and in turn make a difference to the student experience.

Human interactions are important and fundamental for Personal Tutoring, Personal Tutors manage student expectations, they are advocates for learning and support students from a range of backgrounds (Lochtie et al, 2018). HE today is a mass system; there is increased diversity of students and increased student

expectations which puts great pressure on Personal Tutors. The Covid-19 pandemic placed even more importance on Personal Tutors; they have had a vital role in supporting students to feel secure and resilient in an uncertain, changing and challenging environment. And in moving forward effective Personal Tutoring will be crucial in maintaining student engagement and a sense of community; all students will have experienced disruption to their education. In supporting students via Personal Tutoring this relates to the following Office for Students (OfS) criteria.

The new OfS regulatory framework has set out the following objectives to ensure that all students, from all backgrounds, and with the ability and desire to undertake HE:

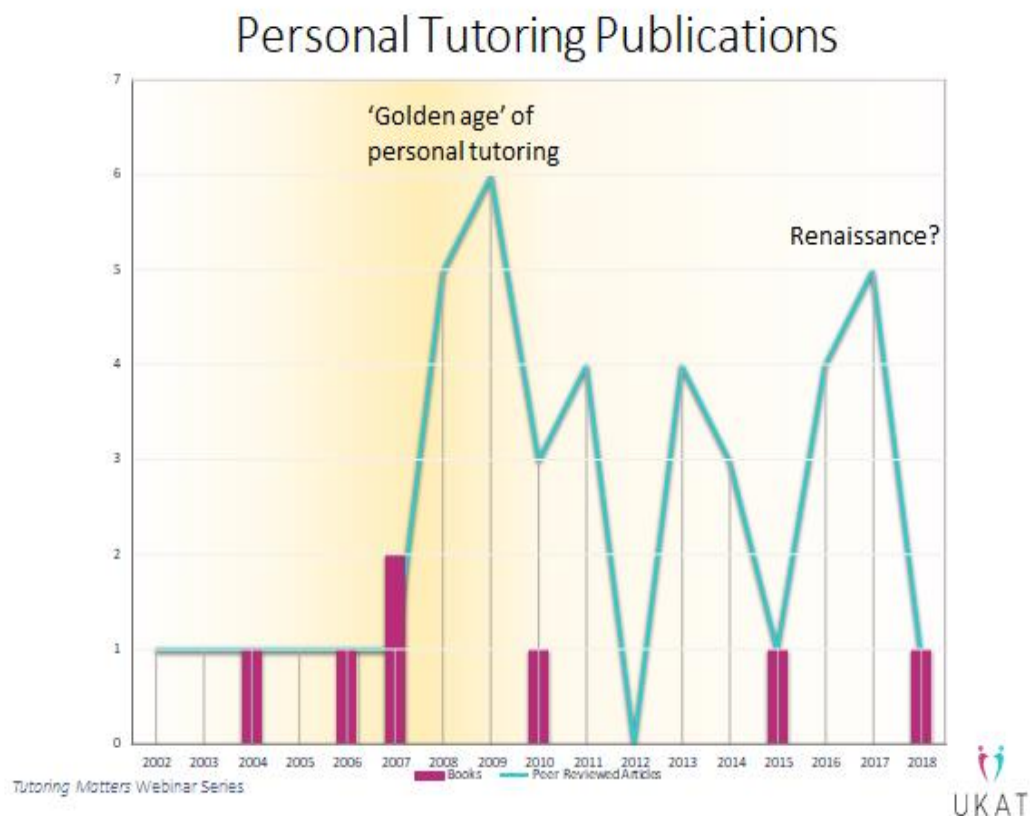
- Are supported to access, succeed in, and progress from, Higher Education (HE).
- Receive a high-quality academic experience, and their interests are protected while they study or in the event of provider, campus, or course closure.
- Are able to progress into employment or further study, and their qualifications hold their value of time.
- Receive value for money.

(OfS, 2018: 14)

Personal Tutors have a significant role to play in achieving these objectives. Therefore, my research is relevant and pertinent now considering the current and changing landscape of HE. It is recognised that tutoring has potential in enhancing student engagement and retention (Ghenghesh 2018; Webb, Wyness, and Cotton, 2017).

Thomas (2018) talks about the field of Personal Tutoring in HE in the UK as being something of an academic research desert. Interestingly, the United Kingdom Advising and Tutoring (UKAT) association at a webinar (January 2019) shared the following slide (Figure 1) which shows the number of Personal Tutoring publications since 2002. In 2009 there is a spike, and 6 peer reviews articles were published, and in 2012 there were no publications in Personal Tutoring.

Figure 1: Personal Tutoring Publications (UKAT, 2019a)



In terms of peer reviewed articles, there have been fluctuations between 1 and 6 over the last 16 years up until 2019; there have been 7 books published over that time, the latest in 2018 and before that 2015 and 2010. To add to this at a UKAT webinar (February 2021), they provided an update as to how many UK peer reviewed publications have been published since 2019; in 2019-2021 there were eight articles published. Also, in 2021, a Special Edition of *Frontiers in Education on Academic Advising and Student Success in Higher Education: International Perspectives* published fourteen articles; the rationale behind this Special Edition was because ‘there is a lack of international literature on advising and tutoring in HE.’ (McIntosh, Troxel, Grey, Van Den Wijngaard and Thomas, 2021).

Despite the importance of Personal Tutoring, it is an under-theorised aspect of pedagogy in UK HE and often overlooked within universities (Raman 2016; Ryan and Tilbury, 2013). Additionally, Miller (2015) states that the research that is in existence tends to not have been undertaken by Personal Tutors themselves and suggests that this is due to workload of tutors. It seems that there is a need for research and publications about Personal Tutoring and it is intended that my

research moves towards addressing this gap and adds to the theory, knowledge and practice of Personal Tutoring.

It is clear from the literature that Personal Tutoring can be a benefit to both staff and students and that the role is diverse in nature (Stuart, Willocks and Browning, 2019; Lochtie et al, 2018). What has been interesting in my experience is the lack of clear guidelines for the role and responsibilities of the Personal Tutor, as found by Owen (2002). Indeed, there appears to be a difference in terms of tutors' perceptions of the role and responsibilities of the Personal Tutor. Stuart et al (2019) make the point that the literature often talks about the benefits of Personal Tutoring but state that there is little research on the perceptions of the role of the Personal Tutor. Furthermore, staff who are given the role have little or no development or training; in my previous institution I was responsible for delivering a mandatory workshop for Personal Tutors, whereas in my current institution, as previously mentioned, there was no development when I joined in 2018. It is this experience that has led to my interest in Personal Tutoring and how I can support staff in a role which is beneficial but has its challenges. Institutions have not always been clear about the purpose of Personal Tutoring or indeed about the structures and models; in fact, tutoring has lacked resources (Lochtie et al, 2018).

A key challenge for staff is the time to undertake the role of Personal Tutor along with the fact that they are unsure at times of how to support students, particularly if they have complex mental health and personal issues. Lochtie et al (2018) discuss the importance of Personal Tutoring at this current time for staff, as expectations are required of tutors to stretch and challenge students. Moreover, the fact that institutions are supporting an extremely diverse profile of students with different backgrounds and varying degrees of disadvantage means there are different expectations of the Personal Tutor role. Indeed, HE is evolving, and this affects student engagement and the relationship between the university and its students; a diverse population of students requires further and more structured support (McIntosh and Cross, 2017). Also, communication methods are different; the more traditional methods may be inappropriate for a generation of diverse students who are used to alternative ways to communicate (Tinto, 2006).

Taking the above into account and the differences in Personal Tutoring in institutions and the changing landscape of HE and the challenges that staff face,

an immediate motivator for my research was to find out tutors' perceptions, to listen to their voice. I wanted to find out how the institution supports Personal Tutors in their role.

## **Personal Context and Professional Context**

My current role is as an Educational Developer in a Russell Group university in an institute that supports staff to deliver innovative and inclusive teaching. It involves delivering and facilitating staff development and training to staff who are teaching and supporting learning. I am the lead for the Higher Education Academy (HEA) Professional Recognition Scheme, a cohort lead for the Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE) and the lead for Personal Academic Tutoring. When I joined the university, support and development for Personal Academic Tutoring was not on the institute's agenda. This has changed recently, hence it being one of my lead roles. In addition to my institutional role, I have a leadership role with UKAT; this is a volunteer role.

My experience of Personal Tutoring began in 2011 when I began working in HE at a post-1992 university, previously I was a primary school teacher. My role in the HE institution was a senior lecturer, and I was the programme leader for the undergraduate Bachelor of Education (BEd) (Hons) Primary Education with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) programme. I led and was responsible for Personal Tutoring on the programme and was a Personal Tutor myself, it was a role I really enjoyed as did most of the BEd team. As a team we took pride in the role and realised the difference that Personal Tutoring made to the student experience. There was nothing more rewarding at graduation than seeing our personal tutees walking across the stage and appreciating the journey and the challenges that some of the tutees had faced during their time studying. Personally, I felt proud of what my tutees had achieved and to be their Personal Tutor. The BEd team embraced the Personal Tutor role and cared about the students; it was seen as an integral part of the academic role.

This is where my interest, passion and enthusiasm for Personal Tutoring began, I became aware of the impact of Personal Tutoring for both the student and the Personal Tutor. My professional interest in Personal Tutoring increased and when I saw a role advertised with a focus on Personal Tutoring I applied for the role.

Therefore, in 2016 I moved to a different post-1992 HE institution as an Academic Development Partner (ADP) (Personal Tutoring). The focus of my role was to

deliver mandatory development and training for all Personal Tutors across the university. This was a different role to my previous role as it was a central institution role. This new ADP role was a real revelation in terms of staff attitudes to students and Personal Tutoring, there were staff who thought that the Personal Tutor role should not be part of the academic role. There were staff who did not want to do the Personal Tutor role, who did not enjoy the role and did not care for the students. On the opposite side of the spectrum there were colleagues who did too much for the student and there were blurred boundaries in terms of expectations and confusion around what the Personal Tutor role was and what it was not. On reflection I can only describe as feeling naïve because of my own experience and perceptions, I thought that all academic staff would want to do the Personal Tutor role and enjoy doing the role. An additional challenge to the ADP role was that because the development and training was compulsory, colleagues had no choice to attend the sessions and were negative at the beginning of development sessions. This resulted in my passion and enthusiasm for Personal Tutoring becoming stronger and taking on the challenge of changing and influencing the perceptions of Personal Tutors.

In 2018 I moved to my current role, working again centrally on development and training focused on teaching and supporting learning, as part of the interview process, I did a short teaching session on Personal Tutoring. I was surprised when I started the role that there was no central support for Personal Tutors, I discuss this further in my thesis. Due to my interest in Personal Tutoring, I became aware of UKAT in 2019 and took on a leadership role. Working for UKAT and my experience in three HE institutions I realised there were some issues and challenges around Personal Tutoring.

## **Research Context**

Taking into account my experiences, I became determined to engage in and undertake research to investigate Personal Tutoring. I identified a need for research on Personal Tutoring with a focus on supporting staff who carry out the role.

The research took place in a traditional Russell Group university in England; the university is a research-intensive university, and the six participants were from one department in the university. To prevent the HE institution from being identified, a

pseudonym for the institution is used – the University of Lawrance. There were 97 Personal Academic Tutors in the Engineering department, 82 males and 17 females.

At my institution in 2016, well-being officers were introduced to provide pastoral support for students. Before this the institution followed the pastoral model as defined by Earwaker (1992). I have worked in two universities before my current one and both adopted the pastoral model to Personal Tutoring. This model will be explored in the next chapter.

During the undertaking of the research, the Covid-19 pandemic happened. This had an impact as all the participant interviews were undertaken virtually and because of the pandemic the structure of Personal Tutoring changed at the institution. The interviews were carried out according to the guidance of the Open University for research during the pandemic (Open University, 2020). The structure and expectations for Personal Tutoring in the institution were for one group and three individual tutorials to take place in an academic year. From September 2020, due to the pandemic, the structure and expectations changed to weekly online group tutorials and three individual tutorials to take place in an academic year. Obviously, these changes had an impact on Personal Tutoring in terms of workload for Personal Tutors, increased expectations of the role and increased student expectations. The institution and Personal Tutors had to rethink how tutoring was carried out and adopt a different approach, which included learning how to use the technology to run online tutorials.

## **Research Focus and Rationale**

A case study approach with a phenomenological research design and IPA as the methodological approach were chosen for my research. In using IPA this allowed for new insights and the exploration of lived experiences. Indeed, it was used to explore the perceptions of the participants and to make sense of their experiences and give them meaning (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). Six Personal Tutors from one discipline/subject area were selected as participants for the study due to their engagement in Personal Tutoring. The participants' experience in tutoring varied from one who was new to tutoring, to the most experienced being a tutor for 23 years. One of the participants was previously a senior colleague and another had just become a senior colleague. The senior colleague role at the institution is pivotal to the overall quality of the student experience and takes responsibility for



overseeing, supporting, enhancing and monitoring the personal academic tutor systems within the School or Department. The six Personal Tutors were interviewed initially in 2020 and then five of the Personal Tutors were interviewed again in 2021; one of the original participants did not respond to the request for a second interview. All participants' views were compared in terms of their perspectives and experiences of Personal Tutoring and comments from the participants were evaluated and interpreted to establish common themes and perceptions. Communication with the participants were via email and interviews took place virtually. In addition to interviewing six participants, I explored other sources of data in adopting a case study approach.

## **Research Aim**

The main aim of this research was to gain an understanding of tutors' perceptions of Personal Tutoring. I started with these emerging research questions at the beginning of my research journey. As a result of the literature review, I revised these original research questions and I share the revised research questions in the summary of chapter one.

- What are tutors' perspectives of Personal Tutoring?
- How is Personal Tutoring structured in HE institutions?
- What professional development and support do staff have for Personal Tutoring?
- How are Personal Tutors rewarded and recognised for the Personal Tutoring role?

## **Overview of Chapters**

Chapter one details the search criteria and theoretical perspectives of my research and explores the history of Personal Tutoring, as well as the various definitions of Personal Tutoring. It focuses on the impact of Personal Tutoring as well the challenges for Personal Tutors, recognising the importance of the tutor-tutee relationship. Additionally, the models of Personal Tutoring are explored in terms of the organisation of Personal Tutoring in institutions. The chapter then discusses professional development and training for Personal Tutoring with opposing viewpoints as to whether it is needed and concludes with perceptions of the reward and recognition for the role and the lack of it.

Chapter two provides the rationale for the research design approach and the methods used to collect and analyse the data. It justifies the epistemological position of interpretivism alongside the ontological position of relativism underpinned by the theoretical perspective of social constructivism. Furthermore, the case study approach, the methodological approach of IPA and the research paradigm of phenomenology are supported by the methods in terms of exploring the perceptions, interpretations and lived experiences of the participants. It also discusses the ethical considerations, how I have addressed potential bias and the trustworthiness of my research.

Chapter three presents the findings following the analysis of the participants' interviews and details the data analysis process following the six stages of IPA. This resulted in three superordinate themes and six subordinate themes which demonstrate the perspectives of the participants.

Chapter four discusses the findings in relation to the literature and previous research on Personal Tutoring and brings this together under the headings of the superordinate and subordinate themes in attempt to address the research questions.

Chapter five concludes with a synthesis of the findings to the research questions along with the limitations of the study. Furthermore, I discuss the recommendations for practice based on the findings and discussion and suggest recommendations for future research. I also consider various ways and opportunities to disseminate and share my research and finish the chapter with a conclusion.

# **Chapter 1 Literature Review**

## **Introduction**

The wider HE and professional context give the background to my research. This literature review has influenced and shaped the final research questions. In structuring the literature review, I considered my experience of Personal Tutoring as well as the contextual issues discussed in the introduction chapter. To address and find out more, I undertook a literature review with a focus on perceptions of the Personal Tutor role, the models of Personal Tutoring that institutions use and support in terms of development and training, alongside finding out about reward and recognition for the Personal Tutor role.

This chapter begins with an outline of the search criteria, theoretical perspectives and then focuses on the history of Personal Tutoring, perceptions of the role of the Personal Tutor, the potential impact of Personal Tutoring, the challenges of Personal Tutoring, models of Personal Tutoring, professional development and training, and reward and recognition for the role. It concludes with the research questions which were developed as a result of the review of literature.

## **Search Criteria**

In searching for literature for review, a search on Scholar.google.com and the Open University library website using the words 'Personal Tutor', 'Personal Academic Tutor', 'Academic Adviser,' 'Personal Development Tutor' and 'Higher Education' was undertaken as well as my institution's library search page. Also, the terms 'Personal Tutoring in Higher Education', 'Personal Tutors' perspectives and 'support for Personal Tutors' was used. The databases used were EBSCO Education and ProQuest Education. I have a leadership role in UKAT and the organisation has a reading list for Personal Tutoring on Mendeley, which I have also used for sources.

I have included international literature in the literature review to gain a broader understanding of Personal Tutoring. This wider perspective allowed me to identify different approaches, theories and findings that may not be present in UK literature.

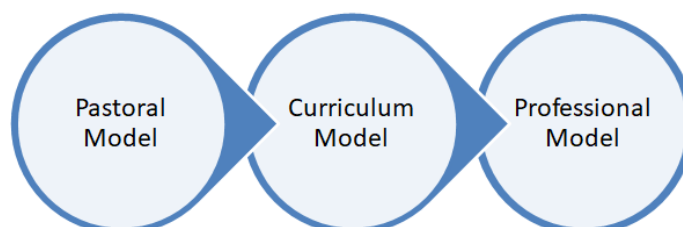
## Theoretical Perspectives

In reviewing the literature, the underpinning theoretical perspective is social constructivism; many of the studies used the social constructivist approach to make sense of reality. Social constructivism is about relationships and examines the knowledge and understanding of the world as perceived by individuals (Amineh and Asl, 2015). Individuals' knowledge and understanding is influenced by culture and context (Derry, 1999; McMahon 1997) as well as the idea that reality is socially constructed through interactions with others. It stresses that learning is a social process. Therefore, this guided the search for studies and helped with the selection of the literature. I looked for studies that focused on finding out individuals' knowledge and understanding of Personal Tutoring based on their lived experiences of Personal Tutoring. This resulted in reviewing studies that mostly involved interviews, questionnaires, surveys, and focus groups.

## Models of Personal Tutoring

In exploring models of Personal Tutoring, the models are approaches to the structure of tutoring in HE institutions. I wanted to find out how institutions are using or adapting models to organise Personal Tutoring to enable tutors to carry out the Personal Tutor role and in turn support the student experience. Referred to throughout the literature is a piece of research by Earwaker (1992), in which he suggested three models of Personal Tutoring: pastoral, professional and curriculum, with the pastoral model being a reactive approach to tutoring moving to the professional model being a more proactive approach. Earwaker's models are baseline tutoring models that are evident in HE today although they may be hybrid versions (Walker, 2020).

*Figure 2: Earwaker's (1992) Models of Personal Tutoring*



Thomas (2006) explains in more detail how these models might look in a university. In the pastoral model, a specific member of tutors is assigned to each student to provide personal and academic support. Bassett et al (2014) state that

the pastoral model is where an academic provides guidance on personal and moral issues, as well as academic support and regular contact. They suggest that academics do not feel comfortable with this and feel that they are not the right person to support students in this way, but they are comfortable providing academic support. Considering this, Watts (2011) highlights the challenges with the pastoral model. She states that the responsibilities and boundaries of the Personal Tutor are not always clearly defined which results in varied understanding, interpretations and practices of the role. McIntosh (2019) suggests this model is difficult if there are large student numbers.

The professional model of Personal Tutoring is centred around the provision of welfare/wellbeing and academic student services professionally trained tutors who take on the role of a Personal Tutor on a full-time basis. However, Basset et al (2014) highlight a challenge being the lack of a defined role and purpose for the Personal Tutor. There is also a separation between academic and pastoral issues and the academic/pastoral boundaries can be blurred (McIntosh, 2019). Indeed, the pastoral and professional models are of a more reactive system, based on student need at a certain moment in time.

The third model is an integrated curriculum model in which Personal Tutoring is timetabled, group tutoring sessions take place as part of the formal curriculum and students are taught by their Personal Tutors (Grey and Osbourne, 2018). Personal Tutors are proactive in supporting students' development; it provides a supportive structure. The benefits of the curriculum model are that it provides clearer structures, roles and responsibility for Personal Tutors. Stevenson (2009) found that students felt that their tutors were more proactive in providing support and guidance. Whereas Thomas (2012) talked about the use of group tutorial sessions being beneficial for peer learning and to help create a sense of belonging. However, there can be logistical problems with this approach if there are large numbers of tutors and students, particularly if tutors are spread across programmes and subject disciplines and students are studying across disciplines (Basset et al, 2014).

Basset et al (2014) explored the three models above and developed an alternative model and called it a Personal Development Planning (PDP) and Personal Tutoring structured model. The model was embedded into modules focusing on

feedback and reflection. This resulted in a lack of engagement on the students' part, although the structured model was aimed at increasing dialogue, reflection and action for learning between tutors and tutees.

An alternative model suggest by Watts (2011) is a hybrid system for Personal Tutoring which is modelled on a blend of pastoral, professional and curriculum models, whereby students have a named tutor for the duration of their programme and tutorials are strategically timetabled. What is more, Foster, Lawther, Keenan, Bates, Colley and Lefever (2012); Thomas (2012); Sosabowski et al (2003) and Owens (2002) suggest that students should be allocated Personal Tutors that teach them for a substantial amount of time each year in order to develop the tutor-tutee relationship and help to create a sense of belonging. This viewpoint is contradicted in Grey and Osborne's (2017) research who found that only a small majority of Personal Tutors felt that students should be allocated tutors who teach them. They concluded that this could be because of it being challenging to organise this in practice.

McIntosh (2018) suggests an integrated model of Personal Tutoring and recommends that an institution should have an integrated or blended model of Personal Tutoring. Her thoughts are that:

- Personal Tutoring is supported by professional services.
- Personal Tutoring is co-ordinated in each school/department.
- Senior tutors may be recruited to support students who are deemed to be 'at risk'.
- Personal Tutoring is integrated into programme structures.

However, a key challenge with this model is that Personal Tutoring needs to be seen as a priority for the institution and senior colleagues.

In taking these models into account, Thomas (2012) suggests a proactive approach to supporting students and that interactions should seek to engage students, rather than waiting for a crisis to occur. Importantly, effective Personal Tutoring should be proactive, integrated, structured and nurture relationships. Finally, a model for Personal Tutoring should explain the responsibilities of the Personal Tutor clearly and precisely with regards to referral, time allocation and knowing whether tutors or students are responsible for arranging meetings (Gubby and McNab, 2013). Braine and Parnell (2011) recommend that tutorials should be

planned and embedded into the curriculum and state that in doing this it will help with student attendance.

Myers (2008) suggested that models of student support which transfer pastoral support away from academics to professional services can result in a separation of educational and support aims: she therefore supports the pastoral model. In fact, Smith (2007) says that there is often a tendency to separate support between academic tutors and professional services tutors, whereas a holistic response to student support is likely to be provided by academic tutors. It is important to note that feedback from students suggests that they would like their Personal Tutor to monitor their progress and give proactive feedback on their academic work (Braine and Parnell, 2011; Stephen et al 2008). Also, often students feel that their Personal Tutor should initiate contact (Ghenghesh, 2017) whereas many Personal Tutors think that tutees should contact them (Gubby and McNab, 2013). However, Small (2013) states that there is a lack of reference in the literature about Personal Tutoring and its link to the review of academic skills. Conversely, Elander (2003) comments that combining the role of academic and pastoral support is considered of more value by students.

Aynsley-Smith and Marr (2006) say that at some universities, Personal Tutors offer only academic support, whereas others offer both academic and pastoral support; this is the case at Lawrance. Stevenson (2009) states that increasingly, universities are adopting a hybrid approach which combines different models in attempts to meet changing student support needs.

Manchester Metropolitan University have a similar approach and model to the Lawrance set up for Personal Tutoring, in that the Personal Tutor role is to support the academic development and progress of students. Furthermore, professional services tutors in the form of student support offices provide pastoral support for students in the faculties (Aynsley-Smith and Marr, 2006). This model was adopted due to the changing needs of a large and diverse student population. Aynsley-Smith and Marr (2006) suggest that by having the student support officers in the faculties, this bridged the gap that existed between academic support offered locally by Personal Tutors and pastoral support centrally by specialist student services; Grant (2006) supports this approach. This model is not named or defined

in the literature. In conclusion, to provide an effective system of Personal Tutoring, it needs to be well established in universities (Stuart et al, 2019).

In exploring the models of Personal Tutoring, I have found that they are focused on the organisation of Personal Tutoring in terms of staffing and curriculum. To add to this, the model of Personal Tutoring found in certain institutions does not fit neatly into the models discussed in the literature. What is also missing in the literature is a model of how an institution should support Personal Tutors in the role. Therefore, in undertaking my research I have suggested a model of how one HE institution could better support Personal Tutors in their role. Please see Table 1 for named models of Personal Tutoring. There are also models discussed in the literature that are not named but are described for example, where Personal Tutors provide academic support only and student support services provide pastoral support.

*Table 1: Authors and Models of Personal Tutoring*

Author	Model/s
Earwaker (1992)	Pastoral, Curriculum and Professional
Myers (2008) Elander (2003) Smith (2007)	Pastoral
Stevenson (2009) Sosabowski et al (2003) Owen (2002) Thomas (2012)	Curriculum
Basset et al (2014)	Personal Development Planning and Personal Tutoring Structured
Watts (2011)	Hybrid of Pastoral, Curriculum and Professional
Aynsley-Smith and Marr (2006) Grant (2006)	Other – tutors provide academic support and student services provide pastoral support
McIntosh (2018)	An integrated or blended approach



## The Personal Tutor Role

The term 'Personal Tutoring' means different things to different people. Across the sector nationally the Personal Tutor role has various titles, for example: Personal Tutor (University of Nottingham, 2021; University of Greenwich, 2021), Personal Academic Tutor (University of Lawrance, 2020; University of Southampton, 2021), Academic Adviser (University of Manchester, 2021; Oxford Brookes University, 2021) and Personal Development Tutor (Anglian Ruskin University, 2020; Ross, Head, King, Perry and Smith, 2014). Atkinson (2014) adds to these titles as they found the following names used: Pastoral Tutor, learning support, mentor and guide. Furthermore, there have been changes in terminology in some institutions (Morey and Robbins 2011) and they have begun to use the term academic adviser/advisor based on the terminology used internationally, particularly in America (NACADA 2017). Scott (2013) a US researcher and Robinson (2012) a UK researcher both state that the term Personal Tutor closely equates to the term Academic Advisor. Increasingly in more recent literature, the term Personal Tutoring is used synonymously alongside academic advising (McGill, Mehvash and Barton, 2020). In fact, a recent e-book, (McIntosh, Troxel, Grey, Van Den Wijngaard and Thomas, 2021) uses both terms as it is called 'Academic Advising and Tutoring for Student Success in Higher Education: International Perspectives.'

The Personal Tutor role has evolved and changed over time in the UK (Grant, 2006). Traditionally the role stemmed from the in loco parentis moral tutor system used since the 16<sup>th</sup> century at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, where Personal Tutors were provided to offer a parental role to students during the transition from home to university (Dobinson-Harrington, 2006; Earwaker, 1992). Historically, it was more of a role to support students with their academic skills and work. Today, the role is all-encompassing and Personal Tutors tend to take on a pastoral role in addition to academic support. Gidman (2001) supports this view, stating that the role of the Personal Tutor might include teaching, counselling and support. To add to this, Personal Tutors are also expected to aid tutees with personal transitions that surface when moving away from home (Dobinson-Harrington, 2006). Furthermore, the literature suggests that students view the Personal Tutoring system as a system whereby they can discuss academic development and personal issues (Stephen, O'Connell, and Hall, 2008; Dobinson-

Harrington, 2006; Sosabowski, Bratt, Herson, Olivier, Sawers, Taylor, Zahoui, and Denyer, 2003).

There are many different definitions of the Personal Tutor role (Mynott, 2016); this is evident across the HE sector in the UK. In fact, in exploring the literature, the role is defined as being mostly performed by academic tutors and the role is described as to provide academic and personal support, including having the knowledge about academic regulations and processes. In addition, the role is referred to as a signposting role to refer tutees to student support services as well as being about building relationships and creating a sense of belonging (Thomas, 2006). However, Huyton (2013:153) acknowledges that the role is open to different perceptions and, to add to this challenge, describes Personal Tutoring as an 'institutionally invisible practice.' This statement helps to support my decision to focus on accessing the perceptions of Personal Tutors.

UKAT (2019a) have a more in-depth definition and describe Personal Tutoring as:

'A purposeful personal relationship with their advisor/tutor enables students to become autonomous, confident learners and engaged members of society. This ongoing and collaborative relationship connects students deeply to their institution, supporting them through their course and beyond.'

Personal Tutoring is an effective way of providing academic development and support for students. In support of the UKAT definition of connecting students to their institution, an aspect of the role is for Personal Tutors to nurture a culture of belonging through supportive and meaningful interactions (Thomas, 2012).

At Lawrance, Personal Tutors are called a Personal Academic Tutor (PAT); the role is to support academic progress and personal development throughout a student's university career (University of Lawrance, 2020). There is a consensus in the literature that the role is about supporting students; this is also the view at Lawrance as seen in the definition of the role above.

Thomas (2006) states that the Personal Tutor role involves helping students to understand their university's expectations and academic requirements of their programme and to review their academic progress. In fact, research also suggests that the role has the potential to help students transition into university life and that it is pivotal to supporting students' different needs (Small, 2013; Watts, 2011).

However, Bassett, Gallagher and Price (2014) state that there are mixed views as to whether the role of a Personal Tutor should be restricted to academic issues as Personal Tutors at times feel that they are being required to be counsellors. At Lawrance the PAT role is more focused on academic support with the well-being officer being responsible for pastoral support for students (University of Lawrance, 2020) and the well-being officers are based in colleges rather than in central support services. What is more, the role can be defined as advising on academic matters, signposting relevant sources of support, active engagement in supporting students with personal development planning (PDP) and working with students to write mutually agreed references (Lambert and Johnston 2010). Indeed, the Personal Tutor can be the connection between the student and student support services in terms of directing the student to the most appropriate support service (Ody and Carey, 2013). Having said that the Personal Tutor also needs to have the knowledge to be able to signpost the student.

Thomas (2012) goes on further and suggests that the Personal Tutor role can do the following:

- 'Be the first point of contact.
- Academic support: helping with assignments and discussion feedback.
- Academic development: support with study skills.
- Pastoral support: supporting with personal issues or signposting students to student services.
- Identifying others who can provide advice and guidance.
- Identify students at risk.
- Provide support and access to information for students who are thinking of leaving.
- Integrating students into the wider university experience'. (42)

To add to this, student engagement should be monitored and if students are not engaging then there should be a follow-up action as a result (Thomas, 2012).

It can be said that Personal Tutoring forms the basis of 'the intimate pedagogical relationship between students and academics that set UK universities apart from the rest of the world' (Attwood, 2009: 33). A viewpoint of the Personal Tutor is that they can be the preferred way of communicating with students when there are concerns over attendance and participation (Thomas, Hill, Mahony and Chambers

2017). The Personal Tutor is the student's first point of contact to discuss any issues relating to or impacting their learning (Alves, 2019); they are often the first person students turn to for advice and support. Similarly, Personal Tutoring acts as a 'conduit between the student and the institution' (Wootton, 2006:118); the tutor is a clear point of contact for students. The role at times goes beyond supporting students in aspects of academic practice (Small, 2013); this suggests more of a pastoral support for students. Notably, Personal Tutoring is important as it has the potential to significantly influence the life of a tutee (Smith, 2008).

Moving on from defining the role of the Personal Tutor, the perceptions of Personal Tutors will now be considered. Owen (2002) found that lecturers were not clear about the role of a Personal Tutor, also that the concept of the Personal Tutor quite often is poorly defined (Braine and Parnell, 2011), whereas Stuart et al (2019) found that a lack of certainty about Personal Tutoring may lead to tutors avoiding it or using rigid or unboundaried practice. Likewise, McFarlane (2016) found in her UK study that six of the eight Personal Tutors interviewed felt that the Personal Tutor role lacked clarity; the Personal Tutors were lecturers with a variety of HE experience in one institution. These perspectives seem to suggest that the role of the Personal Tutor is ambiguous (Ghenghesh, 2018; Basset et al, 2014; Myers 2008; Stephen et al. 2008). Huyton (2013) concurs with this view, stating that there needs to be clearer guidance around the scope of Personal Tutoring and its boundaries and furthermore, Gidman (2001) recognised that there is a lack of clear guidance for Personal Tutors.

The lack of clarity and uncertainty about the role of the Personal Tutor and how it should be performed can impact both tutors and students by making them feel insecure and unsafe (Stuart et al 2019). Research by the QAA (2013) confirms this view and highlights that the lack of clarity around Personal Tutoring may result in a poor student experience.

Additionally, Por and Barriball (2008) explored the reasons behind the Personal Tutor role confusion and ambiguity and stated that this could be because Personal Tutors have wide-ranging responsibilities. To add to this the HE context of widening participation, which means a range of students with diverse needs, further contributes to the contested nature of Personal Tutoring (Watts, 2011). Increasingly, the need for clarity on the role is important, as is establishing

appropriate boundaries and creating a positive and caring relationship (Gardner and Lane, 2010).

An additional challenge is tutors' workload. McFarlane (2016) highlights this, commenting on the fact that tutors in her study had supported tutees who had not been allocated to them. Furthermore, tutors comment on feeling overwhelmed with the demands of the students, in terms of the time needed to support and the difficulties and challenges which students face (Braine and Parnell, 2011; Stephen et al, 2008 and Earwaker, 1992). In fact, the role is multifaceted and with increasing student numbers and competing demands on tutors' time, it can become a difficult role for tutors (Por and Barriball, 2008). Typically, the Personal Tutor role is allocated to lecturing tutors and often they are trying to balance research and teaching responsibilities (Laycock, 2009). Indeed, the relationship of many students with their Personal Tutor is often not close enough and the lack of time and personality mismatch can cause difficulties (Ehrich, Hansford and Tennent, 2004). Furthermore, Grey and Lochtie (2016) point out that the potentially high workload associated with Personal Tutoring is a challenge that is commented upon frequently in the literature as well as tutors not being allocated time to do the role. To add to this, tutoring is not always included in timetables, which results in tutors working beyond their contract or allocated workload and often impacts other aspects of their role such as research (Gubby and McNab, 2013; Dobinson-Harrington, 2006; Owen, 2002; Hart, 1996). Mynott (2016) recognised that Personal Tutors spent time and effort chasing tutees who did not attend Personal Tutoring meetings or engage with the Personal Tutor process; this was outside of workload allocated and felt as an invisible part of the role. To address the challenge of workload and time. Braine and Parnell (2011) suggest that Personal Tutorials should be formally planned and integrated into the curriculum.

In agreement with these views, Riddell and Bates (2010) found that Personal Tutors felt that there was not enough time to address students' support needs and issues, particularly because of the increase in students with complex differences and this in turn resulted in students' needs not being addressed. Watts (2011) agrees and talks about the challenges of meeting the needs of diverse student cohorts. In their study, Personal Tutors also highlighted a concern of the Personal Tutor role being the lack of time they had to support their tutees. This is

highlighted as a key challenge in the literature; Personal Tutors may not feel capable when dealing with complex student issues (Watts, 2011). Additionally, academic tutors can often lack confidence in their ability to offer support and this can be particularly true for students suffering with mental health difficulties (Smith, 2008). Sometimes, Personal Tutors are exposed to emotionally distressing circumstances faced by students, which they may not have the confidence to deal with. They may not have the necessary skills or experiences to deal with distressing situations (McFarlane, 2016).

In order to find out Personal Tutors' perceptions, Lindsay (2011) set up a Personal Tutoring discussion board at her university; she found that tutors were challenged as below:

- Finding it difficult to balance the pastoral and academic strands to the role.
- Lack of how to establish ground rules and boundaries to clarify the role of the Personal Tutor.
- Feeling inadequately trained.
- Knowing when to refer a student to student services.
- Feeling isolated, overburdened, under-resourced, unrecognised and unrewarded.

## **Building Relationships**

Importantly, tutoring needs to be a component in a holistic, a whole institutional approach (Thomas et al, 2017). In the literature, developing relationships is an important part of the role. Riddell and Bates (2010) in their study found that Personal Tutors saw themselves as lynchpins and lifelines for students and key to them developing confidence and self-efficacy. In addition, a positive relationship between a tutor and their tutee has been found to increase self-concept and motivation (Cokley, 2000). In comparison, students may feel like outsiders which can result in a sense of not belonging (Thomas, 2012). However, if students engage with a range of stakeholders in their institutions, including Personal Tutors, this can help to create a sense of belonging and for them to feel connected and this in turn increases student satisfaction and promotes retention as well as supporting students to maximise their capability (Thomas and May, 2011; Palmer, O'Canne and Owens, 2009). Despite being over 20 years ago both Darling (1984) and Stephenson (1984) talk about the importance of Personal Tutors and tutees having a trusting and encouraging relationship and in building this trusting

relationship between tutor and tutee. Not only does this help student retention but it also contributes to student success. Likewise, the relationship can be effective in terms of fostering independent learning and realising potential (Morey and Robbins, 2011). Personal Tutoring is seen as a valued role to student support in order to maximise achievement and minimise attrition (Braine and Parnell, 2011). Bowden (2008) agrees with this view, finding that Personal Tutors were a significant factor in students staying at university. Furthermore, if tutors support students with their transition into university, this will not only help students adjust, but it may also reduce the likelihood of withdrawal from university (Wilcox, Winn and Fyvie-Gauld, 2005). In addition, in Personal Tutorials students feel that it is a safe space in which they can offer critical feedback; this helps to develop their resilience which in turn is a transferable skill in terms of employability (Riddell and Bates, 2010).

There is a wealth of evidence demonstrating that Personal Tutors can really make a difference for students and enhance the student experience, and give them a sense of belonging which is critical, particularly in the first year of university (McFarlane, 2016); they can help and support students in their transition from home to university (Small, 2013; Watts, 2011; Dobinson-Harrington, 2006). Additionally, Personal Tutors help to bring a greater sense of inclusion as well as facilitating engagement, improving achievements and happiness. Personal Tutoring helps to create networks, celebrate success and support students where things do not go to plan, therefore supporting retention and progression as mentioned earlier. Importantly, Personal Tutoring has been identified as an effective way to improve student success in HE (Thomas, 2018). Personal Tutoring can aid:

- student retention.
- academic support and development.
- pastoral support and progression (Fitzgerald, 2014).

However, considering the above and exploring the impact of Personal Tutoring, there are also challenges. Personal Tutors may feel that they have a lack of time allowed for the role and feel overloaded with work (Barlow and Antoniou, 2007). Furthermore, new tutors may feel guilty about not giving students necessary support, and in developing tutors' confidence and competence, the tutors' lack of

supervision, support and training when dealing with intense personal issues is a challenge as well as recognising the importance of boundary setting (Watts, 2011). This is not helped by the fact that tutors sometimes have limited opportunities to support and build relationships, particularly in the first semester (Chan, 2016). Also, meeting the diverse and complex needs of students is a challenge (Stephen et al 2008); tutors may feel anxious when responding to the personal needs of students. In addition, Luck (2010) found that tutors dealing with upsetting disclosures from students were affected psychologically, resulting in exhaustion and being unable to function. Consideration also needs to be given to the widening participation agenda which also presents a challenge for tutors, for example, in understanding a diverse cohort of students with wide-ranging experiences (Stevenson, 2009). Furthermore, this can be challenging for tutors particularly in terms of boundaries and role responsibilities (Watts, 2011) and a further factor to consider is that Personal Tutors may lack the necessary knowledge and skills to support students. In addition, it is important for Personal Tutors to understand their role and those of the support services (Ghenghesh, 2018).

Basset et al (2014) found that in general, Personal Tutors recognised the usefulness and value of Personal Tutoring. However, tutors were concerned about creating a culture of 'nannying' which may affect the independence of the students; they found that student engagement was a problem. In fact, the importance of developing the capacity of tutors and students to engage is the key to the tutor-tutee relationship succeeding (Thomas, 2012). However, Mann (2005) states that a one size fits all approach to encourage engagement may not work and could result in alienation and disengagement. It is known that students who need more support are less likely to seek out help (Bentley and Allen, 2006). Studies have also found that students have unrealistic expectations and that tutors need to make expectations explicit (Thomas, 2012).

The benefits of the tutor-tutee relationship are discussed earlier; however, Holmes, Rupen, Ross and Shapera (1999) advocate caution and recommend not allowing a relationship to become too close due to the unequal power distribution between tutor and tutee. They suggest tutors need to be careful of being perceived of as a friend and avoid being too informal, as well as to be mindful of the boundaries in the relationship. If there is not a quality of relationship then advising can become nothing more than a one-dimensional dissemination of information (McGill, Heikkila and Lazarowicz, 2020), while these authors' research is in the US context,



their findings are relevant to my study as they investigated the perceptions of Academic Advisors. To add to this, this view is supported by McFarlane (2016), who reported that Personal Tutors worry about the boundaries between tutors and tutees.

In summary, the role of the Personal Tutor has many facets. See Table 1 which captures the main themes in the literature. To add to this, the role of the Personal Tutor is clearly of benefit to students; it works and adds to the success of students. But for Personal Tutors there are challenges in terms of workload and meeting the diverse and complex needs of students.

*Table 2: Authors and Main Themes for the Personal Tutor Role*

Authors	Main themes
Dobinson-Harrington (2006)	Pastoral support
Mynott (2016) Small (2013) Stephen, O'Connell, and Hall (2008) Dobinson-Harrington (2006) Bratt et al (2003) Gidman (2001)	Academic and pastoral
McFarlane (2016) Small (2013) Thomas (2012) Watts (2011) Dobinson-Harrington (2006)	Creating a sense of belonging
Huyton (2013)	Open to different perceptions
UKAT (2019b)	Purposeful relationship, connects to institution and supports students through their course and beyond
Wilcox et al (2005) Small (2013) Watts (2011)	Student transition
Lambert and Johnstone (2010) University of Lawrance (2020)	Academic and personal development

Ody and Carey (2013)	Sign posting
Thomas (2012)	To monitor student engagement
Alves (2019) Wooton (2006)	First point of contact for advice
Thomas (2018) Fitzgerald (2014) Thomas and May (2011) Braine and Parnell (2011) Palmer, O'Cane and Owens (2009) Laycock (2009) Stephen et al (2008) Bowden (2008) Thomas and Hixenbaugh (2006) Owen (2002)	Increase in student satisfaction and student retention
Morey and Robbins (2011) Gardner and Lane (2010) Riddell and Bates (2010) Attwood (2009) Cokley (2000)	Building relationships

## Professional Development and Training

There is an assumption that almost all academic tutors will be asked to take on the role of being a Personal Tutor (Mynott, 2016), and that anyone who is a lecturer can be a Personal Tutor without any training; that it will 'come naturally' (Gubby and McNab, 2013; Owen, 2002). McFarlane (2016) found that there were gaps in support for Personal Tutors. This included the lack of training or initial guidance for Personal Tutors, which leads to tutor feeling unsupported.

## Induction for the Personal Tutor Role

Another issue to consider is the kind of support a new Personal Tutor may need to help them with the complex role of a Personal Tutor; it is important as new tutors do not have the experience of experienced Personal Tutors (Small, 2013). It needs to be recognised that many new Personal Tutors do not feel ready for the Personal

Tutor role (Huyton, 2011). Personal Tutors in this study commented on the fact they had no training and had to learn as they went on. In addition, tutors in Huyton's study talked about there being an assumption that they would know how to do the Personal Tutor role. Further consideration needs to be given to the fact they may not have had an opportunity to observe a colleague tutoring or to learn from peers; many new Personal Tutors are 'thrown in at the deep end'. In fact, new tutors may find it difficult to define boundaries between being accessible and being too available and could end up feeling overwhelmed (Ridley, 2006). Furthermore, Ridley (2006) suggests mentoring and informal networking as a strategy to support new Personal Tutors to develop the skills needed for the role. In exploring this further, McFarlane (2016) states that some new tutors may lack confidence and may not feel capable in supporting students, for example, students with diverse backgrounds or complex needs. Smith (2008) agrees with this view in particular for students with mental health difficulties. As a result, they suggest that new tutors would benefit from having either a senior colleague or a mentor to support them in the role. In a US context, Voller, Miller and Neste (2010) suggest that all Academic Advisors should have access to quality training within their first year of doing the role, these findings are germane to my study because the authors' research is focused on the importance of advisor training and development.

Additionally, Stuart et al (2019) in their study found that there was no induction or training for the Personal Tutor role; tutors commented that they just had been 'thrown in' to get on with it and they felt concerned and worried about doing the actual Personal Tutor role. Tutors highlighted that training for the Personal Tutor role would be both beneficial and useful. Interestingly, in HE teacher training, the focus tends to be exclusively on teaching strategy and the subject or discipline with little or no attention given to Personal Tutoring (Stork and Walker, 2015). This is evident in many Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education programmes at HE institutions; the focus of the programme is very much on teaching and learning and assessment methods and strategies.

In the US Habley and Morales (1998) in their research surveyed Academic Advisors, they found that there was little training for academic advising and any training that was in place focused on the communication of factual information. Recognising that Habley and Morales' research was in 1998, Voller in 2013

reported still that very few institutions provided development and training for Academic Advisors.

## **Continuous Development for the Personal Tutor Role**

A recommendation from McFarlane's (2016) research was for Personal Tutors to have some form of continuous professional development, maybe something annual. The point of continuous training was also highlighted in McGill et al's (2020a) paper, they state that continuous training is a need for tutors to remain current and knowledgeable about good practice in tutoring as well as the changing needs of students. In Grey and Osborne's (2018: 32) study they surveyed 48 Personal Tutors and gave them the following statement - 'all tutors must regularly engage in training continuous professional development relating to their Personal Tutoring practice.' 90% of the tutors agreed with this statement, 4% disagreed and 6% responded with 'don't know'. These perspectives seem to suggest a need for development and training. In agreement the NUS Charter on Personal Tutoring (NUS, 2015:2) state under the heading of 'Responsibilities and Expectations of Personal Tutors' that all tutors should 'commit to, and regularly engage in, training and continuous professional development relating to their Personal Tutoring practice.'

Stuart et al (2019), in their action research study on Personal Tutoring, commented that there was a lack of guidance, training and support for Personal Tutors at the University of Cumbria; this mirrors the findings of McIntosh and Grey's study (2017). A review of literature points to a lack of training, support, formal supervision for Personal Tutors (McFarlane 2016; Watts 2011; Huyton 2009; Earwaker 1992), as well as the lack of time to undertake training that may be relevant for the role (Gubby and McNab 2013). Similarly, Gidman (2001) and Por and Barriball (2008) also argue that there is a lack of development and support for Personal Tutors. Skordoulis and Naqavi (2010) asked Academic Advisors in the business school at London Metropolitan University about their attitudes and perceptions toward academic advising via a questionnaire. Thirty-two respondents said they received little or no development in advising. In the US in 2011, NACADA conducted a National Survey of Academic Advising, they found that 60% of institutions provided no professional development to new Academic Advisors (Carlstrom and Miller, 2013).

Although in a United States (US) context, McGill et al (2020b) liken academic advising to adult learning and Academic Advisors to adult educators and make the point that researchers in advising are not engaged with literature within the fields of adult education to explore development and training of Academic Advisors. McGill et al (2020b) recognise that just like Personal Tutors in the UK, Academic Advisors come from different academic and professional backgrounds and therefore development and training is a need for Academic Advisors.

An audit of Personal Tutors conducted by KPMG for Leeds Metropolitan University in 2010 (KPMG, 2010) suggested that guidance and training for Personal Tutors on the role should be formalised. In addition, Race (2010) found that many tutors learned through experience and that the lack of training for the role of Personal Tutor was a concern for colleagues. Moreover, Thomas (2012) found that tutors wanted to feel supported and enabled to implement change and take a more student-centred approach. She suggested that this could be delivered through induction, initial training and ongoing professional development, by bringing tutors together from different areas/disciplines to share ideas, practice and explore common challenges and offer opportunities for training and constructive feedback on progress.

However, in Owen's (2002) study, it was found that some tutors felt that training would be surplus to requirements because the skills and attributes needed for Personal Tutoring came naturally to those that chose to lecture. In contrast, in the conclusion of her study, McFarlane (2016) states that it is worth re-evaluating the continuous support needs of Personal Tutors; indeed, tutors development can be identified as a strategy to support tutors in supporting students (Thomas et al, 2017).

Chan (2016) conducted a study at a university in Hong Kong; he found that Academic Advisors/Personal Tutors received ongoing support at a local level from their school and at a central level from the educational development centre. This was felt as a strength for the system. In identifying a specific skill development, there does appear to be evidence to support the teaching of basic communication skills to all Personal Tutors to help them manage the demands of the role (Lindsay, 2011), particularly, as Personal Tutors are often the first contact for students with an issue or challenge (Stanley and Manthorpe, 2002). Therefore

suggesting training in developing relational strategies should be provided for tutors, which would help to provide more open communication (Bell and Treleaven, 2011). Moreover, Stuart et al (2019) and McIntosh and Grey (2017) stated in both of their studies that there is a need for effective tutors training in Personal Tutoring. Likewise, The National Union of Students (2015) suggest that Personal Tutors should be fully trained on being effective Personal Tutors. Also, tutors need to know where to signpost students to; they need to know about the student services that are available (Ghenghesh, 2018; Grant, 2006).

Clegg, Bradley and Smith (2006) recognise the need for tutors development/training but argue that support needs to be linked to the educational process and linked with teaching rather than separated. Indeed there is a need for tutors development and support for tutors, and it needs to address changes in the HE context. However, Grant (2006) noted in their study that there was a low take-up of tutoring development by tutors; they state that this could have been due to fears over accountability and an expectation for tutors to do more of what they do not feel confident doing. On the other hand, if tutors feel supported, they will discover that tutoring is not an additional source of stress but a rewarding and valuable part of being an academic (Ridley, 2006). Then again, Personal Tutors may not feel they have the skills to do the Personal Tutor role, which could lead to them feeling uncertain or anxious and even the need to avoid doing Personal Tutoring (Stuart et al 2019). Clearly, there is a need for greater tutors training and development as highlighted by McIntosh and Grey (2017). In the US literature Voller (2012) makes a stronger case for development and training stating that if institutions are serious about student learning and retention then they 'must' provide professional development for their Academic Advisors. They discuss the impact of neglecting training and development in terms of Academic Advisors not feeling they can do the role well, impacting students negatively and affecting employee turnover and student attrition.

Furthermore, Walker and Raby (2019) found in their study that there were gaps in support and resources for the role of the Personal Tutor, they reported that Personal Tutors need:

- A clear induction for the role.
- Generic university-wide resources for Personal Tutors.
- Training is needed on the pastoral side.

- Training on looking after yourself.

Personal Tutoring development and support is identified by the QAA (2013) as critical to successful Personal Tutoring provision and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2011) states that tutors in HE institutions need to have access to training and ongoing support that equips them to fulfil their tutoring roles. They highlight the need for support around issues commonly affecting students and that tutors need to know how to respond appropriately.

The University of Warwick in 2017 carried out a Personal Tutoring Review. Participants commented on the lack of training for the role, and they highlighted key areas for development to be focused on being referral processes, role clarity and role boundaries. In the conclusion of the review, the following recommendations were suggested (University of Warwick, 2017: 49-50)

- Approve the development and implementation of Personal Tutor Basic Training, compulsory for all new members of tutors who have, or are likely to have, Personal Tutoring responsibilities – undertaken within the first year of their appointment.
- Approve the development and implementation of Personal Tutor Refresh Training, compulsory for all existing members of tutors with Personal Tutoring responsibilities – undertaken once every three years.
- Approve the development and implementation of compulsory Senior Tutor Training (to be undertaken within the first year of appointment to the role).

In McFarlane's (2016) research, they found that Personal Tutors would like development and training for the Personal Tutor role as an ongoing continuous support; the tutors felt that this would help with developing competence and confidence and support them with the challenges of the role, particularly in terms of supporting students with complex needs. In the US context, Voller et al (2010) agree with this view and found similar issues as they recognise the new challenges facing students and suggest ongoing professional development opportunities for Advisors throughout their careers.

There is evidence of the lack of development/training and support for the role of Personal Tutor, and this is a key theme found in the literature. Grey and Lochtie (2016) in their study found that tutors did not generally feel well supported by their institutions in carrying out the Personal Tutor role. In fact, almost 60% of tutors

stated that their institution did not provide training for Personal Tutors and any recommended training was only provided on demand. In light of this, it is important to develop the capacity of tutors for the role of Personal Tutoring (Thomas, 2012). More recently, tutors are expected to stretch and challenge students (Lochtie et al, 2018), and a diverse population of students requires more structured support (McIntosh and Cross, 2017). Furthermore, tutors do want to feel supported and enabled to implement change and take a more student-centred approach (Thomas 2012).

## **Skills and Values Required for the Role of Personal Tutor**

Additionally, in exploring the literature for development and support for Personal Tutors, it is suggested that Personal Tutors need to possess certain qualities (Gidman, McIntosh, Melling and Smith, 2011; Gidman, 2001). For example, Personal Tutors need to be approachable, honest, empathic, and fully engaged with their role (Roldan-Merino, Miguel-Ruiz, Roca-Caparac and Pedrosac, 2019). In addition, Luck (2010) identifies boundary setting and expectations as important aspects for Personal Tutor training. Also, Personal Tutors need to understand the traits valued by students (Grey and Osborne, 2018); these include acting as an advocate, being empathetic, proactive, reliable, making students feel 'cared' for (Stephen et al, 2008), being enthusiastic (Thomas 2012: Morey and Robbins, 2011), approachable (Braine and Parnell, 2011; Owen 2002), available, having a good level of knowledge, seeming interested in the student (Smith 2008), being supportive, non-judgmental and knowing the student's name (Ghenghesh 2017). Also, to provide Personal Tutors with development and training would help tutors with the relevant skill set needed to deal with the diversity of student demands and issues; to add to this, Wooton (2006) identified a need to develop professional standards and competencies for the Personal Tutor role.

The importance of interpersonal and communication skills is critical to effective academic advising and for effective relationships with students (Menke, Stuck and Ackerson, 2018; Hughey, 2011; Ford, 2007). Khali and Williamson (2014) interviewed Academic Advisors in Engineering at the Southern Polytechnic State University, they found that good practice in advising is based around developing positive relationships, being approachable, good communication and creating a safe and relaxing environment.



NACADA (2017a) in partnership with the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education identified nine aspirational standards for higher education institutes globally called the Conditions of Excellence in Academic Advising. The conditions promote excellence in academic advising and condition six is – empowering advisors through professional development opportunities and clear expectations. NACADA (2017b) have developed core competencies for the Academic Advisor role as models for development and training.

Like NACADA, UKAT (2020) have developed a professional framework for advising and tutoring which has a Professional component which focuses on the commitment that advisors and tutors make to the students they advise, their institutions, their professional practice, and the broader educational community. One of the competencies P3, is that advisors and tutors commit to students, colleagues, and their institutions through engagement in continuing professional development, scholarly enquiry and the evaluation of professional practices. In addition, they have created a Professional Recognition Scheme for Advising and Tutoring.

In considering the suggestions of the need for development/training for tutoring there is a word of caution from Lochtie et al, (2018:6) who state that where training is in place for Personal Tutors, this can be ‘superficial, lacking in sufficient depth and unfit for purpose.’

There are a range of viewpoints found in terms of professional development and training and this consists of gaps in development and training alongside suggestions for development and training. A theme underlying the gaps and suggestions relates to equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). For example, recognising the diverse backgrounds of students, that they may have complex needs and mental health challenges. Personal Tutors need to address the changes in the HE context and the changing needs of students.

Views are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Key Themes for Professional Development

Key themes	
<p>Gaps in training, lack of guidance, lack of support, lack of formal supervision.</p> <p>Gubby and McNab (2013)</p> <p>Owen (2002)</p> <p>McFarlane (2016)</p> <p>Stuart et al (2019)</p> <p>McIntosh and Grey (2017)</p> <p>Watts (2011)</p> <p>Huyton (2009)</p> <p>Earwaker (1992)</p> <p>Gidman (2001)</p> <p>Por and Barriball (2008)</p> <p>Race (2010)</p> <p>Walker and Raby (2019)</p> <p>University of Warwick (2017)</p> <p>Grey and Lochtie (2016)</p> <p>Habley and Morales (1998)</p>	<p>A need for continuous updating in training maybe annually.</p> <p>Ongoing professional development.</p> <p>McGill et al (2020)</p> <p>Grey and Osborne (2018)</p> <p>McFarlane (2016)</p> <p>Thomas (2012)</p> <p>Thomas et al (2017)</p> <p>Chan (2016)</p> <p>Stuart et al (2019)</p> <p>McIntosh and Grey (2017)</p> <p>National Union of Students (2015)</p> <p>Clegg, Bradley and Smith (2006)</p> <p>QAA (2013)</p> <p>UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2011)</p> <p>University of Warwick (2017)</p> <p>KMPG (2010)</p> <p>Voller et al (2010)</p>
<p>Training for some tutors is surplus to requirements.</p> <p>Owen (2002)</p>	<p>Support for new Personal Tutors.</p> <p>New tutors would benefit from having a mentor.</p> <p>Small (2013)</p> <p>Voller et al (2010)</p> <p>Ridley (2006)</p> <p>Smith (2008)</p> <p>University of Warwick (2017)</p>
<p>New tutors are thrown in at the deep end.</p> <p>Huyton (2011)</p>	<p>Personal Tutors need to possess certain qualities.</p> <p>Lindsay (2011)</p>

Stuart et al (2019)	Gidman,et al (2011) Gidman (2001) Roldan-Merino et al (2019) Grey and Osbourne (2018) Stephen et al (2008) Thoma (2012) Morey and Robbins (2011) Owen (2002) Ghenghesh (2017) Bell and Treleaven (2011) Menke et al (2018) Hughey (2011) Ford (2007) Khali and Williamson (2014)
Tutors need to know where to sign post students to. Ghenghesh (2018) Grant (2006)	There can be a lack of engagement for development and training. Grant (2006)
Equality, diversity and inclusion. Smith (2008) Voller et al (2010) McFarlane (2016) McIntosh and Cross (2017)	

## Reward and Recognition

In terms of reward and recognition for Personal Tutoring, in Grey and Lochtie's research (2016), not one of the participants stated that the Personal Tutor role is recognised in promotion criteria. To add to this, Huyton (2011) found that the focus of recognition for tutors in annual appraisals was on research outputs and that there was nothing in place that recognised the Personal Tutor role or the associated work. Therefore, tutors felt that Personal Tutoring was overlooked in terms of reward and recognition, and they commented that they would have liked to more recognised for the role. Tutors perceived Personal Tutoring as being

unacknowledged and in turn felt unsupported in the role and to add to this, tutors may not feel Personal Tutoring is valued by their institution because of a lack of investment in development and training (Woods, 2020). Similarly in the US, the role of the Academic Advisor is often not included in performance reviews, in reward structures or considered for promotion (Habley and Morales, 1998). Personal Tutors can feel unrecognised and unrewarded suggests Lindsay (2011), and not valued for the role. It is important that Personal Tutors feel valued; they need reward and encouragement and ultimately for their role to be recognised and rewarded (Thomas, 2012). In Skordoulis and Naqavi's (2010) study the Academic Advisors felt that academic advising should be part of promotion and performance review.

In the Personal Tutoring Review at the University of Warwick (2017), they found that Personal Tutors wanted Personal Tutoring to be recognised as a key aspect of teaching and learning and they found that Personal Tutoring was perceived as low status work with no workload recognition, and not directly contributing to career development, progression, promotion or other reward.

In addition, for Personal Tutors to make tutoring a priority, it needs to be valued by institutions alongside teaching, research and other scholarly activities and Personal Tutors need to believe that it will enhance their careers (McFarlane, 2016; Stephen et al, 2008 and Trotter, 2004). Indeed, Morey and Robbins (2011) state that Personal Tutors want to feel valued in the role and rewarded for it; they concur with previous comments and recommend that Personal Tutors should receive more support from institutions in terms of reward and recognition. Moreover, given the key role that Personal Tutors play in enhancing the student experience, institutions need to acknowledge their contribution (Morey and Robbins, 2011). Recently, UKAT (2020) have introduced a Professional Recognition Scheme; the scheme is for Personal Tutors to evidence their professional practice via an e-portfolio to enable them to feel valued and recognised for the Personal Tutor role and receive professional recognition. The scheme was created as UKAT acknowledge that there is a lack of recognition and reward for the Personal Tutor role.

## **Summary**

The literature review influenced and developed the original research questions. It is evident that there are a range of perspectives of Personal Tutoring and that

there are many different facets to Personal Tutoring as well as a range of viewpoints and thoughts which are evident in literature. However, Watts (2011) highlighted the need for further theoretical and empirical investigation into the concept, practice and tutors' experience of Personal Tutoring in HE to inform practice. This is still the case; Chan (2016) comments on the lack of research into how students and tutors perceive the role of Personal Tutoring. In the review a finding is the lack of clarity around the role of the Personal Tutor and that the expectations of the role are not always clear. Therefore, I kept the first research question I suggested in the introduction chapter – what are tutors' perspectives of the role of the Personal Tutor? I wanted to explore tutors' perspectives of Personal Tutoring in my research.

In addition, there are a range of models for Personal Tutoring which are focused on the organisation of tutoring; they are not focused on a holistic approach to Personal Tutoring in terms of supporting tutors; they focus on the logistics and the role of the Personal Tutor. It is clear that a one size approach does not fit all and that there is a range and variety of models of Personal Tutoring in HE.

Furthermore, Personal Tutors are often not supported in the role in terms of training and development and there is a consensus of a requirement for development and training. In starting my research, I found that published material on Personal Tutoring does not always reflect the current UK context of increased student number, tutors/student ratios, greater student diversity and the competing demands on tutors in relation to research, learning and teaching. Additionally, the need for support is growing each year because of the changing landscape of HE. Stuart et al (2019) concluded in their study that the status and value of Personal Tutoring needs to be raised, and that the worth of the role should not be forgotten. In reviewing the literature about development and training for Personal Tutors this led me to the second research question and to develop the research question from a what to a how – how does an HE institution support the development of Personal Tutors? I wanted to investigate the experiences of Personal Tutors in terms of development and training.

In reviewing the literature there is evidence to support the benefits of Personal Tutoring for students; there is limited evidence about the benefits for Personal Tutors. It is crucial that time is made for the development of the Personal Tutor

role (Morey and Robbins, 2011); it could be argued that Personal Tutors need more institutional support and specific development in how to support the needs of their students. Moreover, there is support for the role of the Personal Tutor to be rewarded and recognised; in acknowledging this I chose reward and recognition for the third research question as specified in the introduction chapter. But I developed the question to focus more on the specific context – how does an HE institution reward and recognise the role of the Personal Tutor?

In reading the literature, I believe at its heart, Personal Tutoring is about getting to know your students. In fact, to observe students' development throughout their course gives you a sense of pride as their tutor, and it gives you insights into individuals whose experience of life is likely to be very different to that of previous generations of students. In recognising the importance of Personal Tutoring and the Personal Tutor role and creating the research questions as mentioned above, I identified a further research question. I recognised that there was a gap; in considering tutors perceptions of Personal Tutoring, the development of Personal Tutors and reward and recognition for the Personal Tutor, I realised that there was a potential to create a model of Personal Tutoring for HE institutions in terms of how they could better support Personal Tutors in the role. Therefore, I created the final research question - what model of Personal Tutoring could HE institutions use to better support Personal Tutors?

The review has influenced and shaped the research questions which have evolved from the emerging research questions shared in the introduction chapter. Clearly, there are differences in terms of tutors' perspectives of Personal Tutoring and models of Personal Tutoring. There seems to be a lack of professional development and support for Personal Tutors in addition to a lack of reward and recognition in HE institutions. There was the potential to suggest a model as to how HE institutions could better support Personal Tutors in their role. These themes identify a gap in the research therefore highlighting the need for my research and the following research questions. The revised research questions are below.

- What are tutors' perspectives of the role of the Personal Tutor?
- How does an HE institution support the development of Personal Tutors?
- How does an HE institution reward and recognise the role of the Personal Tutor?

- What model of Personal Tutoring could HE institutions use to better support Personal Tutors?

The methodology for my research and my theoretical perspective are informed by the literature review; I have used a methodological approach that explored the lived experiences of Personal Tutors and analysed their perceptions. The literature focuses on individuals' perceptions and understanding of Personal Tutoring, hence choosing IPA as the methodological approach. Including international literature in my literature review has enriched and broadened my perspectives. It allowed me to build upon a more diverse and comprehensive knowledge base, providing a solid foundation for my research. In considering my own theoretical perspective in conducting the literature review, I recognised that the studies involved exploring relationships and individuals' knowledge and understanding of Personal Tutoring. Context, culture, and experiences all influenced the perspectives of individuals. Therefore my theoretical perspective aligns with the social constructivism perspective.

# Chapter 2 Methodology

## Introduction

This chapter will discuss the structure of the overall case study research design approach and the methods used to collect and analyse the sources of data. The chapter explains why an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach is adopted through the research as well as establishing the ontological and epistemological assumptions. The approach and methods used are driven by the research questions, as well as being influenced by my own beliefs that knowledge production and learning is a social experience. I believe that as individuals we learn through experiences of existing networks, our own experiences, our own perspectives as argued by social constructivism, a social learning theory developed by Lev Vygotsky (Denscombe, 2017).

## Epistemology and Ontology

Epistemology is about how we come to know about the world; it is belief about the nature and scope of knowledge (Twinning, Heller, Nussbaum and Tsai, 2016). The epistemological position of interpretivism is that knowledge comes about by understanding a person's unique worldview. It is the appropriate epistemological position for my research because the knowledge about Personal Tutoring comes through understanding the participants' unique views. Interpretivism also focuses on the reality as relative and subject to the interpretation of individuals (Punch and Oanea, 2014). My research the reality of Personal Tutoring is dependent on participants' respective views and their perceptions of Personal Tutoring. Interpretivism sees reality as something that is subjectively constructed by people's thoughts and actions (Denscombe, 2017).

The aim of interpretivist research is to find out about people's beliefs and their lived experiences, in this research, the beliefs and experiences of Personal Tutors, hence the research questions as the what and the how. Indeed, typical interpretivist questions ask why? For example, how does this person understand Personal Tutoring? What is their lived experience of Personal Tutoring? (Richardson, 2018). In fact, interpretivist research aims to understand phenomena; in my research, Personal Tutoring from an individual's perspective (Creswell, 2009). The epistemological position of interpretivism is relevant to the research questions because as the researcher I wanted to find out and explore the



participants' unique worldview of Personal Tutoring and understand their individual interpretations of it. And by asking about staff perceptions of Personal Tutoring and how they believe their institution supports them in tutoring, it enabled me to find out the individual beliefs of the participants and their lived experiences of the phenomena of Personal Tutoring.

My own lived experiences of Personal Tutoring made me think about how Personal Tutoring has evolved since Earwaker's (1992) models and that Personal Tutoring and the HE context has changed over the last thirty years. I became aware through my own experiences, and in close analysis of the participants' responses that there was the potential to explore Personal Tutoring practice taking into account these changes and current context of HE. I realised that there were limitations in how institutions support Personal Tutoring hence the recommendation of a model.

Ontology is belief about the nature of being or reality (Twinning et al, 2016). The ontological perspective of relativism relates to the ontological idea that knowledge always comes from an 'evolved perspective or point of view' (Raskin, 2008: 13). Therefore, there are multiple realities, in fact, people's experiences will determine their own point of view. In my research, the people are the Personal Tutors, and their individual viewpoints and experiences of Personal Tutoring were explored. This is further support for the research questions which focus on individual viewpoints and experiences in terms of the what and the how. Furthermore, in adopting the epistemological and ontological positions of interpretivism and relativism for my research, it means I will be able to address the research questions.

## **Theoretical Perspective**

The participants of my research are Personal Tutors, and they interact with their tutees, each other, and a range of staff across the university to support themselves and students, therefore, their perceptions will be based on these interactions and experiences as well as their existing knowledge and beliefs. This is the rationale for the social constructivist position (Adams, 2007) and drives the research questions as they focus on the Personal Tutors' perceptions based on their interactions and experiences.

As mentioned, the design of the research is informed by the social constructivist position, which is that individuals view and interpret new information and experiences through their existing network of knowledge, experiences and beliefs (Denscombe, 2017). The participants in their role as a Personal Tutor interpret new information through their experiences and interactions with colleagues and students, building on their existing knowledge and their own beliefs. My research is about the understanding of Personal Tutoring as the participants experience it. It uses a constructivist approach, which can be linked back to Husserl's philosophy of phenomenology; in fact, Creswell (2009) talks about the constructivist researcher needing to make sense of the meanings others have about the world. I am making sense of the meaning that the participants have about Personal Tutoring. Indeed, reality and knowledge are subjective because they are socially constructed and mind dependent; therefore truth lies within the human experience (Chilisa and Kawulich, 2012).

This theoretical perspective supports the epistemological and ontological positions of interpretivism and relativism. Furthermore, it does this because social constructivism is about making sense of my participants' interpretations and recognising that their reality and knowledge about Personal Tutoring are subjective (Chilisa and Kawulich, 2012; Creswell, 2009). Interpretivism focuses on the reality of Personal Tutoring being subject to the interpretation of individuals; it is subjectively constructed by an individual's thoughts and actions (Denscombe, 2017; Punch and Oanea, 2014).

## **Case Study**

The study is a small-scale case study where the case is the Department of Engineering at the University of Lawrence, a case study is a means of gathering data together (Hamilton, 2011). Smith et al (2009) are advocates of using the case study in IPA. The context makes the case study an appropriate choice, the context is unique: a particular University, a particular university department and a particular disciplinary field. In support of the case study approach Merriam (1994, as cited in Hjelmbink, Bersten, Uvhagen, Kunkel and Holmstrom, 2007: 94) state that:

‘A case study can focus on a specific person or situation, gives a good description of a phenomenon, has an heuristic value and allows an inductive approach.’

This justifies the case study approach as the case is the Department of Engineering and there is a good description of Personal Tutoring (the phenomenon) from interpreting individuals' perceptions.

A case study can be justified when it describes something intrinsically interesting (Platt, 1988). The aim is to develop a full understanding of the 'case' as possible (Punch and Oancea, 2014). It allows exploration of Personal Tutoring using a range of data sources (Baxter and Jack, 2008). In adopting a case study method this enabled I as the researcher to closely explore the data within the unique context of the University (Zainal, 2007). Yin (2014:16) defines a case study as:

'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context.'

In analysing sources of data and documentation within the University of Lawrance it allowed construction of a rich picture of Personal Tutoring, the case study is looking at the context from multiple perspectives, with data from multiple sources. This approach allowed exploration of Personal Tutoring and to answer the research questions and how Personal Tutoring is influenced by the context in which it sits (Baxter and Jack, 2008).

The case study approach is strongly aligned with the phenomenological approach as IPA is committed to the particular and influenced by idiography (Smith et al, 2009). For example, IPA in this research helps to understand how Personal Tutoring has been understood from the perspective of particular people – the Personal Tutors in a particular context – the Department of Engineering at the University of Lawrance. Idiography provides a comprehensive and detailed analysis of the case in this research, it enabled me to gain rich insights into Personal Tutoring.

Combining both a phenomenological and a case study approach helped to answer the research questions within this research. The phenomenological approach gains the views of the Personal Tutors through their lived experiences and the case study approach examines Personal Tutoring within a specific case, the Department of Engineering at the University of Lawrance.

## Phenomenology

A phenomenological approach was selected as the appropriate research paradigm to explore the views of participants: the Personal Tutors. The aims of phenomenological research are to reach the essence of the participants' lived experience of Personal Tutoring, while ascertaining and defining Personal Tutoring (Cilesiz, 2010); therefore it fits with my research as my aim was to find out the essence of Personal Tutors' lived experience of Personal Tutoring. Indeed, the intention of the research was to gather data regarding the perspectives and interpretations of participants about the phenomenon of Personal Tutoring. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), phenomenology is the research of lived experiences and the ways we understand those experiences to develop a worldwide view; it is the study of 'phenomena' as they present themselves in individuals' direct awareness, in fact, perceptions. It deals with people's first-hand experiences with their own perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, feelings and emotions (Denscombe, 2017). Moreover, phenomenology is a methodological framework, a process that seeks reality in individuals' narratives of their lived experiences of phenomena (Yuksel and Yildirim, 2015). This supports my research as I explored the lived experience of Personal Tutors; what is more, the research questions focus on the participants' own perceptions, attitudes, feelings and emotions towards Personal Tutoring as the phenomena.

Vandenberg (1997:11) regards Edmund Husserl as 'the fountain head of phenomenology in the twentieth century'. Husserl argued that a person's perception of an object did not exist in the external world independently or that the information about objects is reliable (Groenewald, 2004). Phenomenology is an approach that focuses on how life is experienced; it is not about explaining the causes of things. This fits with my research as I am not seeking out the causes of perceptions. Additionally, in practice it is about seeing things through the eyes of others, to understand what they understand and to provide a description of how the group in question experience the situation (Denscombe, 2017). In fact, Groenewald (2004) goes on further to state that the aim of the researcher in phenomenological research is to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon they are researching. As the research questions are about perceptions and the views of the participants about Personal Tutoring, the link to phenomenology is clear. The research is exploring how the participants experience Personal Tutoring; therefore, the research questions are answerable

using the phenomenological approach. To add to this, Giorgi (2005) says that phenomenology focuses discussion on human subjectivity; he believed that it has contributed to the understanding of consciousness and subjectivity. Furthermore, this philosophy focuses on human beings and their worlds; indeed, Husserl believed that anything that is dealt with in the world must come through consciousness. In considering this, it is recognised that thoughts and views of the participants are subjective, based on and influenced by their own personal experiences of Personal Tutoring. In this research the experiences of the participants, the Personal Tutors, are based in the research context of the University of Lawrance.

My research is investigating human experience (Personal Tutors) and explores the way they view the world considering their own experience (Personal Tutoring). As mentioned previously, phenomenology is not primarily concerned with explaining the causes of things but provides a description of how things are experienced at first hand by those involved (Denscombe 2017). In fact, phenomenologists argue that the focus should be on internal processes of consciousness and that the objective should be put aside. Additionally, they would argue that direct awareness are the only things we really can know, since all knowing depends on individual perceptions. Furthermore, phenomenologists believe that reality is always socially constructed and is therefore unavoidably ambiguous and plural (O'Leary, 2011). This supports the underpinning theoretical framework of the research – social constructivism and the research questions as they are focused on the what and the how as opposed to the why.

However, the challenges of the phenomenological approach are that it lacks scientific rigour; it is associated with description and not analysis and there is a lack of generalisation from studies (Denscombe, 2017). In defence against this statement, by identifying the methods I used in my overall design and the detailed section (3.16) on data analysis, I demonstrate the use of the six steps of IPA, which illustrates a robust and rigorous approach to analysing the data. In considering the trustworthiness of the research (see 3.7), I hope to overcome any criticisms.

## **Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

I chose IPA as a methodological approach for my research, as it supports my own beliefs. My own beliefs come from my experience as a primary school teacher, a senior lecturer and an educational developer. I have learnt that people make sense of experiences based on their experiences and their existing knowledge. That knowledge comes from understanding others as well as their own beliefs and values and that people can interpret the same experience in a different way. I believe that learners', whether they are a five-year-old child, an undergraduate student or an academic staff member, experiences and viewpoints are subjective and are based on their own interpretations of life. As an IPA researcher I am engaged in a double hermeneutic because as the researcher I am trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of Personal Tutoring (Smith et al, 2009). The result is an account of how I as the researcher think the participant is thinking. In my research, I have intuitively sought to probe the surface meanings of the participants' responses by reading in between the lines for deeper interpretation (Finlay, 2011).

In addition, IPA was the appropriate approach to choose as it is about relationships, and it gave me as the researcher the opportunity to understand the lived experiences of my participants (Alase, 2017). In relation to my research, it is about the lived experience of Personal Tutoring from the point of view of the participants, the Personal Tutors. I wanted my research to focus on the participants and IPA allowed that to happen as it is participant-orientated (Smith et al, 2009). IPA is a research tool that helped me to understand lived experiences from a participant's perspective. It also acknowledges that as the researcher, I engaged with the participants' views, thoughts, and words through an interpretative lens (Biggerstaff and Thompson, 2008). I wanted to attribute meaning to the participants' lived experiences of Personal Tutoring (Smith, Jarman and Osborn, 1999); hence, choosing IPA as the approach to my research. Also, in my research, it was important to understand, give the participants a voice, to interpret and make sense of their thoughts; IPA is the approach to do this according to Larkin, Watts, and Clifton (2006). This is further justification for using IPA.

IPA focuses on each participant's lived experience (Smith, 2017) and it is a qualitative research approach which focuses on how people make sense of their

life experiences (Smith et al, 2009). It is phenomenological and supports the epistemological and ontological assumptions of my research as well as the theoretical perspective of social constructivism. IPA allowed me to explore the in-depth experience and meaning making processes of the participants, the Personal Tutors. Additionally, the perceptions of the participants have been determined by their own point of view, which supports the theoretical perspective of social constructivism, that individuals view and interpret information and experiences through their own beliefs (Denscombe, 2017). Indeed, constructivism is about the understanding of the world as others experience it; this approach is linked to Husserl's (1989) philosophy of phenomenology and supports the IPA approach. To add to this, the ontological perspective, a relativist approach, is about knowledge coming from an evolved perspective or point of view; therefore, this approach is supported in analysing staff perceptions.

IPA focuses on exploring lived experiences and the meanings attached to those experiences (Braun and Clarke, 2013). In addition, IPA allowed for similarities and differences to emerge from the data and helped to gain an insight into the participants and the meaning they derived from their experiences as a Personal Tutor (Smith et al, 2009). Furthermore, it was about finding out about what the experience of tutoring is like for the Personal Tutor and what sense the Personal Tutor is making of what is or has happened. Thus, this overall approach supports my own personal beliefs, that individuals' perceptions and interpretations are determined by their own lived experiences. In addition, the IPA approach helped to answer the research questions; it is an approach to qualitative, experiential and psychological research. Additionally, phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography are central theoretical perspectives to IPA (Smith et al, 2009).

- Phenomenology in my research is exploring the lived experiences of participants and the ways we understand those experiences to develop a worldwide view of Personal Tutoring (Marshall and Rossman, 2016). It is 'the research of 'phenomena', Personal Tutoring as they present themselves in individuals' direct awareness, in fact, perception, rather than socio-historic context or even the supposed 'reality' of an object, is the focus of investigation' (O'Leary, 2011: 2).
- Hermeneutics is the theory and practice of interpretation (Braun and Clarke, 2013). For my research it is the interpretation of Personal Tutoring.

- Idiography is concerned with the particular, in the sense of detailed analysis. 'Analysis must be thorough and systematic' (Smith et al, 2009:29).

IPA focuses on participants' (the Personal Tutors) perceptions or accounts of Personal Tutoring; it does not attempt to make objective statements regarding Personal Tutoring and is about me as the researcher finding out about the participants' personal world (Personal Tutoring) and to take an 'insider perspective' (Dunworth, 2008). Indeed, IPA is relevant for my research as it situates Personal Tutors in their contexts, exploring their personal perspectives, and starts with a detailed examination of each case before moving on to more general claims (Smith et al, 2009). Furthermore, IPA suggests that experience can be understood via an examination of the meanings which people impress upon it and for this research it attempts to understand what Personal Tutoring is like for the participants, whilst also analysing, illuminating and making sense of Personal Tutoring (Smith et al, 2009). IPA is an iterative and inductive cycle (Smith, 2007).

In addition, IPA recognises that in providing answers to the Personal Tutoring questions, participants will be aiming to make sense of their own tutoring experience; indeed participants are sense-making creatures and in finding out about the Personal Tutors' experiences, as the researcher, I was dependent on what they told me, interpreting the answers to understand their perceptions (Smith et al, 2009).

## **Ethical Considerations**

My research adheres to the British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines (2018) and favourable Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). Approval was gained from the HREC reference HREC/3089/Barton; the HREC process and approval required submitting the following documents:

- Writing Research Project Protocol (Appendix 3).
- HREC Project Registration and Risk Checklist (Appendix 4).
- Research Participant Consent form including Privacy Notice Information (Appendix 2).
- Information letter (Appendix 1).
- Interview questions, first round (Appendix 5).
- Interview questions, second round (Appendix 6).
- Information Asset Entry form (Appendix 7).



Research ethics are about being clear about the nature of the agreement I have entered with my research participants and ethical research involves getting the informed consent of those you are going to interview, question, observe or take materials from. Furthermore, it involves reaching agreements about the use of data, and how their analysis will be reported and disseminated (Bell and Walters, 2014). Therefore, it is about avoiding harming participants and any deception (Gray, 2009) and in gaining ethical consent I have made it clear that this research does not harm participants and avoids deception. Ethical approval for this research has been received from both the Open University and the University of Lawrance.

However, the ethical context is a concern for my research as it involves people and the context in the research is the university and the people are the Personal Tutors. Furthermore, Gray (2009) explain that ethics is about the appropriateness of the researcher's behaviour in relation to the research participants or those who are affected by it. Indeed, the participants in research have rights; confidentiality and anonymity are important to ensure that individuals cannot be identified; this is explained to participants in the information letter and consent form (see appendix 1 and 2). In addition, Davies and Hughes (2014) state the importance of participants being given clear information including how they withdraw from the research if they wish to, as seen in the information letter in appendix one.

The participants for the interviews have been kept anonymous; however, in using audio data, this could raise ethical concerns because voices are recognisable (Braun and Clarke, 2013); therefore it is important that these are kept very securely in password protected files. Furthermore, my research adopts the university's Code of Ethics (University of Lawrance, 2017) and the Open University's Human Research Ethics (The Open University, 2020). However, I was concerned as two of the participants, in addition to their Personal Tutor role, have senior roles in their department and possibly could be identified by their responses; therefore, when they state their roles in any responses, I have changed the name of the role to a general 'senior colleague' as to avoid identification. In addition, when referring to the participants in the findings, I use the gender-neutral terms of 'they' 'them' and 'their' to contribute to anonymity.

In terms of confidentiality, this refers to agreeing with participants about what may happen with their data; typically it means ensuring that no one other than me as the researcher knows who participated in this research (Kaiser, 2012). However, a challenge is, that the research contains descriptions of research participants in terms of their role and their subject area and confidentiality breaches are of concern. Indeed, traits and experiences of individuals or groups make them identifiable in research reports (Sieber, 1992). It is recognised that the participants are entitled to their privacy and in reading the information letter (appendix 1), this explains that all information will be and has been kept strictly confidential and private.

In line with the Open University's Retention Schedule, the research data will be kept for ten years after the completion of the project and then the data will be reviewed to establish whether it is still of value, and if the data are of no further value, they will be destroyed.

In giving ethics the attention above, the research is ethically sound, (Stutchbury and Fox, 2009) it is conducted in accordance with rules, laws and codes of conduct which prevail in the research setting, it involves decisions that have a defensible moral basis, it makes those decisions transparent to the reader and maintains the integrity of the research. In justifying the methods, explaining decisions and how the decisions relate to the research questions, this maintains the integrity of my research.

## **Insider Researcher**

There is a potential prejudicial influence, as I as the researcher have processed the data and their analysis, and there are risks of researcher bias as the research is being conducted in my own institution (Davies and Hughes, 2014). As a researcher in my own institution, I must consider myself as an insider researcher. Furthermore, I have my own beliefs, morals, and values about Personal Tutoring. Likewise, Opie and Brown (2019: 33) make the point that an insider researcher is 'never neutral', because of their own beliefs and values and that this can indeed inform and influence the research process. Nonetheless, I do recognise that it is difficult for my research to be free from personal bias and influence and to be completely objective. As the researcher, I accessed the Personal Tutors' experience through a process of intersubjective meaning-making rather than directly from a Personal Tutor's narrative (Larkin and Thompson, 2011).

As the researcher I needed to be careful of the extent to which I thought I knew and what I wanted or expected to find. I had to be aware of myself and ensure that the focus was on the independent worlds of the participants I interviewed and acknowledge the power of myself as a researcher. Even so, difficulties arise when the researcher is conducting research within their own context, therefore an insider researcher. Importantly, Drake and Heath (2011:74) highlight the need for reflexivity, 'the awareness of the theorist of their unique part in the construction of new knowledge' and the importance therefore of a critical and analytical reflection. As an insider researcher I needed to be conscious of the influences of my position and the potential biasing it provided; therefore I needed to develop reflexive objectivity (Kvale, 2009).

As a researcher in my own institution, consideration must be given to being an insider researcher as mentioned above. Indeed, Drake (2010) states that there are challenges in conducting research in your own workplace, because of the researcher's status in the institution and what the researcher represents to participants. Furthermore, I have been a Personal Tutor and worked closely with tutors in my previous institution; I needed to be aware of my own perceptions and interpretations; therefore, it was important that there was an ongoing process of reflexivity by myself as the researcher regarding my own subjective experiences (Coolican, 2004). I have had to be critically self-aware of the way in which my own values, experiences, interests, assumptions, and preconceptions might have influenced the collection and interpretation of the data (Willig, 2008).

Respondent biases (Robson, 2002) can also occur during interviews as sometimes the participant may withhold information or give answers that they believe the researcher is looking for. To avoid this, the research questions were open and not leading. On the other hand, the researcher can be the greatest threat to trustworthiness if time is not spent on preparation of the research (Poggenpoel and Myburgh, 2003). In addition, the degree of familiarity the researcher has with the participants can introduce bias into research (Mehra, 2002) and as an insider researcher, this may mean that I only discovered what I thought I did not know, rather than opening enquires to encompass what I did not know that I did not know (Chenail, 2011). To ensure I engaged with reflexivity in my research, I recorded the interviews, took notes during the interviews, and created transcripts which Shelton and Flint (2019) state present an opportunity to

be reflexive. Also, the IPA step by step data analysis process allowed me to think reflexively because in revisiting the data as part of an iterative process, I was able to consider my subjectivity in how I analysed the data. However, there are tensions and limitation in reflexivity; some authors argue that it can be seen as narcissism (Tomkins and Eatough, 2010; Cunliffe, 2004; Weick, 2002).

## **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness or truth value of qualitative research and transparency of this research are crucial to the usefulness and integrity of the findings (Cope, 2004). Trustworthiness of research refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and method used to ensure the quality of research (Polit and Beck, 2014). In addition, trustworthiness is crucial to the confidence readers have in the findings of a research (Connelly, 2016) and in defining trustworthiness Lincoln and Guba (1985) outlined criteria which many qualitative researchers identify with; these criteria are credibility (validity), dependability (reliability), confirmability (objectivity), and transferability (generalisability). A brief overview of each criterion is below:

- Credibility – is the extent to which qualitative researchers can demonstrate their data are accurate. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that it is not possible for qualitative researchers to prove in any absolute way they have ‘got it right’. It is about the confidence in the truth of the research.
- Dependability – is about whether the research instrument would produce the same results when used by different researchers. It is about the stability of data over time and the conditions of the research (Polit and Back, 2014).
- Confirmability – this is concerned with the extent to which qualitative research can produce findings that are free from the influence of the researcher (Denscombe, 2017). It is the neutrality, or the degree findings are consistent and could be repeated (Connelly, 2016).
- Transferability – is the extent to which findings are useful to persons in other settings; it is about the probability of some aspect of the data recurring elsewhere (Denscombe, 2017; Connelly, 2016)

By being transparent in detailing the methodology and the approaches taken, the challenges listed above are limited. Furthermore, as a check on reliability and to ensure the trustworthiness of my research, I have included an explicit account of the methods, analysis and decision-making that has taken place and I have

explained the rationale behind certain choices to address the trustworthiness of this research on Personal Tutoring.

If there are doubts about the quality of the data generated, then there will be doubts about the credibility of the findings (Denscombe, 2017); therefore in assessing the quality of my research, the criteria for trustworthiness have been considered. Additionally, I have given thought to the credibility and validity of my research; these are about the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers (Hammersley, 1990). In fact, there are many different forms of validity to consider in addition to credibility and transferability as mentioned above; some of these are detailed in the following Table 4.

*Table 4: Forms of Validity*

<b>Validity</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>How it is addressed in the research</b>
Construct	It is concerned with whether the data collection measures what it aims to measure, making use of evidence from previous research in the field (Denscombe, 2017).	This research draws on existing theories and knowledge on tutoring which shows the relevance of the data.
Internal	Is about whether the effects identified are in fact being caused by the variable under research, rather than some other, confounding factor (Goodman, 2008).	It is about asking the right questions. Therefore, the data are directly related to the research questions.
Convergent	Is about whether a measure is related to other measures designed to assess the same construct (Cramer and Howitt, 2004).	The 'measure' of perceptions is via interviews. In adopting a phenomenological approach and finding out perceptions, this 'measure' is appropriate.
External	Refers to the generalisability of the research, e.g., to what other groups do the research findings apply? To	As mentioned earlier, in focusing on transparency in detailing the

	what other contexts do the findings apply? (Mathison, 2005).	methodology of the research, the findings could apply to other contexts.
Face	It asks a simple question 'on the face of things, does the researcher reach the correct conclusions?' (Salkind, 2010).	In assessing the research and detailing the methodological approaches and data analysis, this helps to address this type of validity.

## Reliability

It is important, in conducting research, to ensure that the research instruments are reliable as well as the findings being valid (Thomas, 2009). As mentioned above, reliability refers to the possibility of finding the same results; it is about consistency, thus the concept of reliability is about the rigor with which I as the researcher approached the task of data collection and analysis (Davies and Hughes, 2014); indeed, it is about whether the research instrument would produce the same results on different occasions (Denscombe, 2017) and it is also about the degree to which the findings of the research are independent of accidental circumstances of their production (Kirk and Miller, 1986). In exploring reliability, it is a challenge as an insider researcher; I have inevitably influenced the research process and the knowledge produced; this is applicable to conducting interviews (Braun and Clarke, 2013, Yardley, 2008). Furthermore, as a research interviewer, everything is relative to everything else; no conclusions can be made from what one person tells another and there is no reliable truth in described experiences (Davies and Hughes 2014). In terms of the interview, reliability is about whether participants who answered the questions did so honestly. Through the demonstration of how the interviews were conducted in my research, I hope that other researchers can see that procedures are reputable and reasonable decisions have been made in order that the research could be replicated (Denscombe, 2017). Reliability is about trustworthiness and the dependability (Polit and Back, 2014) of the methods of data collection and analysis.

In satisfying reliability criteria in qualitative research, Moisander and Valton (2006) suggest the following:

- Make the research process transparent, describe the research strategy and data analysis methods in detail.
- Pay attention to theoretical transparency, make explicit the theoretical stance from which the interpretation takes place.

In addressing reliability in my research as Moisander and Valton (2006) suggest, in this chapter I have made the research process, the research strategy and data analysis methods clear and detailed the steps taken in conducting the research.

## **Confirmability and Objectivity**

Additionally, to consider are confirmability and objectivity which are about ensuring that my research design includes processes that verify the truthfulness or meaning being claimed in the research (Jenson, 2008). To address this in my research, I have discussed my role as an insider researcher, any potential bias that may have arisen and how I have used appropriate research methods. In addition, I have clearly described the data collection and analysis process.

## **Generalisability**

A concept considered in this research is generalisability; this is about whether the results generated can be applied to wider populations (Santiago-Delefosse, Gavin, Bruchez, Roux and Stephen, 2016; Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis and Dillon, 2003). However, some researchers argue that generalisability is not a meaningful goal for qualitative research (Johnson, 1997; Schofield, 1993); researchers tend to talk about it as a weakness (Smith, 2017). In adopting a case study approach, an expectation is not that the results can be applied to wider populations. My research is focused on staff at one institution, one department and in one subject area. I recognise that phenomenological research does not involve large numbers and it will be difficult to justify generalising from the findings (Denscombe, 2017). However, I recognise that my research will offer a significant contribution to the theory, knowledge and practice of education, and it might have potential beyond the current and immediate context of my research. Therefore, I feel it will be important in influencing Personal Tutoring in HE; it is relevant and has the

potential to make an impact on how Personal Tutoring is perceived and supported in HE institutions.

## **Fittingness**

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) work established the concept of fittingness; this is about whether a hypothesis from one context fits to another context. This was considered, that is, if findings from this Personal Tutoring research fit contexts outside it (Mulhall, 2000). Additionally, fittingness also relates to transferability. As mentioned earlier, it is about the ability of myself as the researcher to show that the findings of this research have meaning to others who wish to explore staff perspectives of Personal Tutoring (Beck, 1993). Furthermore, it relies on me as the researcher providing readers with the thick description and the procedures and processes of the research for them to determine if and how they will use the information in their own lives (Melrose, 2010). Given that this research focusses on interpretation, it is difficult to see how fittingness can be arrived at entirely empirically (Gadd and Jefferson, 2007). However, by providing the data and analysis of this research, it is hoped that the research meets the criterion of fittingness and that in reading the research, individuals will view the findings as meaningful in terms of their own experiences (Sandelowski, 1986). I recognise that my research has posed exploratory questions, which is a characteristic of qualitative research; in using open-ended questions, this enabled the participants to respond with their own thoughts. This resulted in responses that were meaningful to the participants, unanticipated by me as the researcher and rich and explanatory in nature (Mack, Woodson, MacQueen, Guest and Namey, 2005). Considering that my research is in a particular context, an HE institution, the findings will have meaning to HE institutions and to Further Education institutions. My findings could be applied in another context, and I believe the findings are meaningful to individuals outside of my research as I am making a significant contribution to the theory of Personal Tutoring.

## **Sampling**

Rather than basing my research on a representative sample, in using IPA, a smaller sample size is fit for purpose; therefore I decided to use a purposive sampling strategy. In fact, using a small sample for the IPA approach is ideal, as it allowed breadth and depth for each interview and the following analysis involved (Skinta and Brandbett, 2016). In comparison, a representative sample involves a



cross-section of the population, whereas a purposive sample is a non-probability sample that is selected on the characteristics of a population and the objective of research (Denscombe, 2017). In my research, the participants were selected as they are Personal Tutors, and the objective of the research was to investigate Personal Tutoring. I deliberately sought out participants who were Personal Tutors. A non-probability sample is when the researcher chooses a sample of participants from a population, knowing that it does not represent the wider population (Etikan, Abubakar and Alkassim, 2016). In using this sampling strategy, it supports the case study and phenomenological approach of the research as it seeks out participants who were Personal Tutors, which were needed for this research to explore the phenomena of Personal Tutoring (Lewis-Beck, Bryan and Liao, 2004). In fact, a purposive sample strategy assumes that to explain Personal Tutoring, rather than an abstract view of experiences, it requires direct engagement between theory and empirical accounts, therefore supporting the phenomenological approach (Emmel, 2013). For these reasons, a purposive, non-probability sample was used as I felt this kind of sample was fit for purpose; the sample was hand-picked, in this case six Personal Tutors (Denscombe, 2017).

Moreover, participants should have significant and meaningful experiences of the phenomenon being investigated (Creswell and Poth, 2016; Moustakas, 1994). The sample was selected based on judgement and the purpose of the research; the senior tutor in the School of Engineering was asked to suggest six staff who were Personal Tutors from their school. This type of sampling is low cost and a relatively quick way of gathering data.

However, Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2013) state that while purposive sampling saves time, money and effort, this could be at the expense of information and credibility. Bearing this in mind, in terms of credibility, every effort has been made through detailing the methodology and trustworthiness of the research to demonstrate that the data are of quality and accurate; the data accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers – Personal Tutoring (Denscombe, 2017; Hammersley, 1990).

## **Interviews**

Interviews were chosen as a research instrument as they enable experiences, opinions, views, attitudes, and perspectives to emerge that have breadth and

depth which extends beyond that which a structured questionnaire would deliver (Davies and Hughes, 2014). This in turn supports gathering information to address the research questions. Furthermore, the strengths of interviews are identified by Braun and Clarke (2013): they enable the researcher to obtain rich and detailed data, they are flexible and allow for smaller samples, which is the case in my research as I had six participants, they are ideal for sensitive issues and as the researcher I had control over the data produced which increased the likelihood of generating useful data. In addition, interviews can be used to describe the meaning of a phenomenon that several individuals share (Marshall and Rossman, 2016), in this case Personal Tutoring. The focus in the interviews was on the verbal responses given. I decided for my research that the micro level details such as, how something is said, non-verbal behaviour, tone and pitch, would not be a focus. This was due to the context of the interviews being virtual due to the pandemic.

It was important to recognise that IPA is an iterative approach which benefits from detailed engagement with a small sample to explore the phenomenon – Personal Tutoring. Therefore, one-to-one interviews fitted most closely with the IPA approach as they enabled an in-depth and personal discussion to take place (Smith et al, 2009) and allowed the research questions to be addressed. Additionally, in line with the IPA approach, I conducted two interviews with the participants; this enabled a more in-depth data collection as a purpose of the phenomenological interview is to describe the meaning of a phenomenon that participants share (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). This multi cycle data collection is a key aspect of IPA; it represents the iterative process of IPA rather than a linear approach. It helped to revisit and focus on the participants' own interpretations and meaning of their experiences and allowed me to delve more deeply into those interpretations and meanings. Often in phenomenological studies, more than one interview takes place with each participant (Creswell and Poth, 2016). Therefore, I included a statement in the consent form to ask participants to agree to take part in further interviews if necessary (appendix 2). To add to this, a key feature of IPA is the spiralling of data collection to ensure the phenomena are exhaustively described. It also allowed me to get closer to answering the research questions. Additionally, I decided it was not necessary to include questions in relation to the demographics (age, gender and ethnicity) of participants; the questions chosen were to address the research questions. Most of the interview questions (see

appendix 6 and 7) were open-ended, inviting an honest, personal comment from participants, permitting freedom of expression and eliminating bias because respondents were free to answer in their own way (Walliman, 2006). However, I recognised that they are more demanding and time-consuming for participants; they are difficult to code and the participants' answers were open to my interpretation as the researcher (Walliman, 2006). They also may leave data which are quite raw and require time-consuming analysis.

In choosing closed questions, I recognised that the answers fit into categories which had been decided by me as the researcher and these answers provided information which lent itself to being quantified and compared (Denscombe, 2017), enabling comparisons to be made across participants in the sample. They were also quicker to code than word-based data (Bailey, 2008; Walliman, 2006). In addition, they are quick to answer and there is a limited range of possible answers (Walliman, 2006). However, they did not enable participants to add any remarks, qualifications and explanations and there is a risk that the categories might not be exhaustive and that there might be bias in them (Oppenheim, 2000).

Additionally, I explored the options in terms of structured and semi-structured interviews. A structured interview uses a pre-defined set of questions and a pre-determined format, whereas a semi structured interview is guided by a set of questions and prompts for discussion (Punch and Oancea, 2014). Indeed, semi-structured interviews were used as this provided flexibility and a data collection method well-suited to the intended analysis and the research enquiry (Willig and Rogers, 2017). They also allowed me as the researcher to adapt to participants. In addition, a series of open-ended questions were designed prior to the interview with the aim of eliciting an in-depth exploration of staff experiences in Personal Tutoring. The questions in the interview were open-ended to enable exploration of participants' interpretations of Personal Tutoring (appendix 6 and 7), in terms of gaining an insight into what the participants said they did rather than simply a reporting of their views. It is this insight that I explored. They allow the participants to 'speak in their own voice and express their own thoughts and feelings' (Berg, 2007:96).

However, in using interviews, Braun and Clarke (2013), acknowledge that there are limitations, that interviews are time consuming for both the researcher and

participant and that there is a lack of breadth and a lack of anonymity. It may also be off putting to some participants, and it is not necessarily 'empowering' for participants as they have less control of the data produced. Consideration needed to be given to the interrelated power of the interview: the power relationship (Alshenqeeti, 2014). It is possible that power may have emerged from myself as the researcher either intentionally or unintentionally. Kvale (2006) refers to this as 'power dynamics' and the researcher ruling the interview, and that as the researcher I needed to consider the social interactions that were important to the interviewing process. Another challenge is that in responding to the questions, participants' answers could be influenced by what they think I would agree or disagree with (Hammersley and Gomm, 2008). I recognise that the participants' responses are subjective and that there is a reliance on the participants giving accurate and honest responses about their lived experiences (DeCarlo, 2018).

The interviews were conducted virtually due to being unable to do them face-to-face due to the Covid-19 situation and in line with the Open University (2020) updated guidance on 'Conducting research involving human participants in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic'. However, I did wonder whether this would affect the quality of the interviews, but this did not appear to be the case as discovered by Cabaroglu, Basaran and Roberts (2010) who found that pauses and repetitions in face to face and online interviews do not differ significantly and Deakin and Wakefield (2013) who reported that building rapport can be established just as well as in face-to-face interviews. Interviews were recorded using a sound recorder; this served as a learning tool and allowed unplanned questions to be asked. I also took notes, which helped to ensure all thoughts were collected and documented (Braun and Clarke, 2013). What is more, the interviews were focused in terms of a conversation with a purpose and this enabled me as the researcher to retain a high degree of control; it enabled a collection of rich and detailed data about individual experiences and perspectives (Davies and Hughes, 2014). As the researcher conducting the interviews, I ensured I listened (Dornyei, 2007) and created an atmosphere in which the participants could feel more at ease and talk freely (Alshenqeeti, 2014).

## **Sources of Data**

To gain a rich picture of the phenomenon, Personal Tutoring, the case study approach adopted allowed the gathering of data from multiple sources. In addition

to the phenomenological research, the following sources of data were explored: a pilot study in preparation for this research, the evaluation of weekly online group tutorials and the Framework for Online Group Tutorials for 2021-22.

A pilot study was conducted to inform this research, I interviewed two senior colleagues and six Personal Tutors completed questionnaires, the participants were from the subject areas of geography and pharmacy. The aim of the study was to gain an understanding of staff perceptions of Personal Tutoring. Thematic analysis (TA) was used as a method for identifying themes and patterns of meaning from participant responses, it is a form of qualitative data analysis that focuses on identifying, organising and interpreting themes in textual data (King and Brooks, 2018). Text was organised into units which were transformed into meanings, represented as phenomenological concepts or themes (Miller, 2002; Priest, 2002). In using TA it involves the iterative deepening of meaning inherent in phenomenology, it is the process of reading and re-reading (Usher and Jackson, 2014). It uses individuals' perspectives and words as the focus of the research and as the researcher interpreted the words (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke and Braun, 2017). The perceptions of the participants were determined by their own point of view which supports the theoretical perspective of social constructivism, that individuals view and interpret information and experiences through their own beliefs (Denscombe, 2010).

As an institution following the introduction of weekly online group tutorials, Personal Tutors were surveyed to find out their perceptions of the group tutorials. They were asked to complete an online survey anonymously.

A report was written by the Deputy Vice Chancellor of Student Engagement to build on the experience of the online weekly group tutorials. The report acknowledged the vital role that Personal Tutors played in supporting students to fulfil their academic potential, and feel secure and resilient in an uncertain, changing and challenging environment. It also stated the importance of effective tutors in maintaining student engagement and a sense of community. Tutorial content was developed locally and centrally with resources from the Careers Network, the Equality and Diversity team and the Academic Skills centre.

## Data Analysis

The data for my research are the perceptions of participants gained through the interviews, collected as audio data and written data. Furthermore, phenomenological data analysis begins with repeated engagement with the data (Liamputtong, 2010; Miller, 2002) and involves coding; to clarify, IPA data analysis involves an iterative and inductive cycle (Holland, 2014). I chose this method of data analysis as a result of the research questions; the research questions were a focus and the driver in analysing the data using an IPA approach. IPA was chosen as it relies upon idiography, which is an in-depth analysis of single interviews and examining individual perspectives of participants in their unique contexts. This links directly to the research questions which were about finding out staff perspectives. I also wanted to explore the possibility of developing a new model of Personal Tutoring in terms of the structure as well as creating a new model as to how HE institutions could support Personal Tutors. The research questions and IPA data analysis approach enabled me to do that.

I started with the transcript of one interview before moving on to look at the others. This follows the idiographic approach to analysis, by beginning with particular examples and slowly working up to more general claims (Smith and Osborn, 2008). For my research, this process meant I was able to address my research questions.

There are six stages of data analysis in IPA methodology (Kettle, 2020); these are shown in the Table 5 based on Smith et al's (2009) framework. This involves searching for initial themes, an in-depth analysis of Personal Tutors' responses and then a final identification of themes across all participants (Smith et al, 2009 and Kettle, 2020). This is the framework and steps I followed in analysing the data.

*Table 5: Six Steps of IPA*

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6
Reading and re-reading	Initial noting	Developing emergent themes	Searching for connections across emergent themes	Moving to the next case	Looking for patterns across cases

The first step was 'reading and re-reading'. I listened to each interview to create a transcript, then I listened to each interview again whilst reading the transcript. I found this useful in ensuring that the participant was the focus of the analysis. In fact, reading and re-reading through each interview transcript allowed me to become more familiar with the entire body of data (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). Listening and re-listening to the audio recording also enabled me to become fully immersed in the data Smith et al (2009). In addition, to capture my first impressions as I read the interview transcripts and listened to the recordings, I kept notes and I focused on key words and phrases that stood out in relation to the research questions (see example below). Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) suggest recording observations and reflections about the interview as well as thoughts and comments of potential significance. This helps to become immersed in the data.

Example of note taking for participant A:

*Staff perspectives – Personal Tutoring*

- *Academic well-being*
- *A working relationship*
- *Professional development x 2*
- *Well-being x 2*
- *A friendly face*
- *Summarised and mentioned professional development and well-being again*
- *A very good working relationship*
- *Positive experience for the student*
- *Helpful*
- *Can make a difference to a student if they have developed a relationship*
- *Small impact on student retention – not really due to a Personal Tutor*

Next, the second step, 'initial noting', was the most time consuming. The process was about developing familiarity with the transcripts and the Personal Tutors' comments. It helped me to identify the ways in which the Personal Tutors talked about Personal Tutoring as well as their understanding and thought processes (Smith et al, 2009), which helped to address the research questions. Furthermore, this step was about me exploring the data as the researcher. The aim was to produce a thorough and detailed set of notes and comments on the data; these included descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments as defined by Smith et al (2009: 84) as follows:

- Descriptive comments focus on describing the content of what the participant has said, the subject of the talk within the transcript (normal text, see the example in Figure 3).
- Linguistic comments focus upon exploring the specific use of language by the participant (*italic text*, see Figure 3).
- Conceptual comments focus on engaging at a more interrogative and conceptual level; it is more interpretative (underlined, see Figure 3).

These comments are close to the participant's explicit meaning and therefore have a clear phenomenological focus (Smith et al, 2009). Furthermore, the process involved reading, reflective writing and rigorous interpretation of the data, which is part of the hermeneutic circle (Laverty, 2003). I ensured that I paid close attention to the text in each transcript and avoided superficial reading of the text (Smith et al, 2009).

Figure 3: Example of step 2

Interviewee A

Emergent themes	Original Transcript	Exploratory comments
	<p><i>How long have you been a Personal Tutor?</i></p> <p>So, I first started in September 2015, <i>okay</i> the first year I was just a Personal Tutor when I just started teaching really and then the following <i>year</i> I was Senior Tutor, so then I progressed so it's Mahvish now since I took over as Head of Education last Summer. But, yes so, I started straight away.</p> <p><i>Have you been a Personal Tutor anywhere else?</i></p> <p>No, just at Birmingham.</p> <p><i>What are your experiences of Personal Tutoring? How do you feel about Personal Tutoring?</i></p> <p>When I first started, I think it was a little bit daunting because I had informal training and advice from colleagues so from my Head of Education at the time who I was reporting into so they just gave me a little bit of insight of what they do and sent me, I think Jeff Bale had a PDF document and sent that through to me so it was a little daunting because it was my first time teaching and err I'd been appointed since April I think so I had a few months but it was my first time you know having to look after inverted commas a group of students. I think I had around 10, so it was a fair number to start off with erm and er but then I guess I er</p>	<p><i>5 years as a personal tutor, the second year progressed to senior tutor. Experienced.</i></p> <p><i>She started straightaway that indicates it was part of her role from the beginning. Her voice went higher when she said this.</i></p> <p><i>They use the word 'daunting' three times. Why did they find it daunting and why do they think for new staff it is daunting? Is she implying that the role is difficult?</i></p> <p><i>Informal training What does this mean and look like?</i></p> <p><i>They just gave me. This indicates she feels that this was not enough. It was her first time teaching.</i></p> <p>You start learning with them, you don't</p>

Then, the third step, 'developing emergent themes', was about reducing the amount of data but maintaining complexity. The themes emerging at this stage were phrases. They not only reflected the Personal Tutors' original words and thoughts, but also my own interpretation of these words and thoughts (Smith et al, 2009) (see appendix 8 for further details). In identifying emergent themes, I considered the descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual comments from step 2 and in



analysing the text, the themes became more focused and interpretative (Jeong and Othman, 2016). Additionally, the emergent themes were mostly short phrases or sentences. I kept in my mind and was guided by the research questions and literature.

Figure 4: Example of step 3

Interviewee A		
Emergent themes	Original Transcript	Exploratory comments
Experienced personal tutor	<p><b>How long have you been a Personal Tutor?</b></p> <p>So, I first started in September 2015, <b>okay</b> the first year I was just a Personal Tutor when I just started teaching really and then the following year I was Senior Tutor, so then I progressed so it's Mahvish now since I took over as Head of Education last Summer. But, yes so, I started straight away.</p> <p><b>Have you been a Personal Tutor anywhere else?</b></p> <p>No, just at Birmingham.</p>	<p><i>5 years as a personal tutor, the second year progressed to senior tutor. <u>Experienced.</u></i></p> <p><i>She started straightaway that indicates it was part of her role from the beginning. <u>Her voice went higher when she said this.</u></i></p>
Informal training	<p><b>What are your experiences of Personal Tutoring? How do you feel about Personal Tutoring?</b></p> <p>When I first started, I think it was a little bit daunting because I had informal training and advice from colleagues so from my Head of Education at the time who I was reporting into so they just gave me a little bit of insight of what they do and sent me, I think Jeff Bale had a PDF document and sent that through to me so it was a little daunting because it was my first time teaching and err I'd been appointed since April I think so I had a few months but it was my first time you</p>	<p><i>They use the word 'daunting' three times. <u>Why did they find it daunting and why do they think for new staff it is daunting? Is she implying that the role is difficult?</u></i></p> <p><i>Informal training <u>What does this mean and look like?</u></i></p> <p><i>They just gave me. <u>This indicates she feels that this was not enough. It was her first time teaching.</u></i></p>
Feeling worried when they first started		

The fourth step, 'searching for connections across emergent themes', was about charting or mapping the development of the themes as I as the researcher thought they fit together. As suggested by Smith et al (2009), I typed all the themes into a list and highlighted themes as red, green or blue to form a group of similar themes in a table (see below) and I followed Smith et al's (2009) suggestions of looking for patterns and connections between themes as follows:

- Abstraction – this is about identifying common links and putting similar emergent themes together to form a superordinate theme, e.g., the Personal Tutor role. The similar emergent themes then form the subordinate themes, e.g., relationships, academic and professional support and signposting (see in red font below).
- Subsumption – this is like abstraction, but it is when an emergent theme is a superordinate theme, e.g., development and training, and it brings together a range of related themes, e.g., induction, specific development sessions and skills sessions (see in green and blue font below).

- Numeration – this is about how many times emergent themes occur throughout the transcript, e.g., the role of the Personal Tutor as below.

Figure 5: Example of step 4

Interviewee A – part 2, step 4

List of themes	Group of themes	Superordinate theme	Subordinate themes
<p>The role of tutor/tutoring -- academic and professional support</p> <p>Relationships</p> <p>The role of tutor/tutoring - signposting</p> <p>Attribute of the role</p> <p>Relationships</p> <p>Attribute of the role</p> <p>The role of personal tutor</p> <p>Workload and time commitment - role</p> <p>Sense of belonging/community - challenges – skills</p> <p>Setting boundaries – skills</p> <p>Development and training, induction – new personal tutors</p> <p>Wellbeing and mental health – development and training</p> <p>Signposting – role</p> <p>Development and training - diverse needs of students – skills</p> <p>Reward and recognition</p>	<p>The role of tutor/tutoring -- academic and professional support</p> <p>Relationships</p> <p>The role of tutor/tutoring - signposting</p> <p>Relationship</p> <p>The role of personal tutor</p> <p>Workload and time commitment – role</p> <p>Signposting – role</p> <p>Attribute of the role</p> <p>Attribute of the role</p> <p>Sense of belonging/community - challenges – skills</p> <p>Setting boundaries – skills</p> <p>Induction – new personal tutors</p> <p>Wellbeing and mental health – development and training</p> <p>Diverse needs of students – skills, <u>development</u> and training</p> <p>Reward and recognition</p>	<p>The personal tutor role</p> <p>Development and Training</p> <p>Reward and recognition</p>	<p>Relationships</p> <p>Academic and professional support</p> <p>Signposting</p> <p>Induction</p> <p>Specific development sessions</p> <p>Skills sessions</p>

'Moving to the next case' is the fifth step and is about moving to the next participant's transcript and repeating the previous steps. As the researcher, for each analysis of the participant's transcript, I needed to set aside the ideas coming out from the analysis of the previous text (Smith et al, 2009); this is in line with IPA's idiographic theoretical perspective.

Finally, step six is 'looking for patterns across cases'. This was about looking for connections across the interviews to identify individual and shared meaning (Smith et al, 2009). As suggested by Noon (2019), I produced a table of superordinate themes and the related subordinate themes (appendix 9). Indeed, this was an iterative process as I went to each table I created for each participant (see Figure 4 for an example), reviewed them and revisited each transcript. However, it was a challenge in deciding which themes were more relevant than others. In doing this I focused on the research questions as the driver. I also choose themes that were mentioned by several participants. Furthermore, in following this process, I identified three superordinate themes that captured the perspectives of the Personal Tutor: information and knowledge required for the Personal Tutor role,

professional development and training, and reward and recognition for the role of Personal Tutor.

## **Summary**

This chapter explains the actions taken to investigate the perceptions of Personal Tutors along with the rationale for the methodological approach. Furthermore, it presents the reasons behind the research design and the considerations given to ensure that reliable and valid data were delivered through the research questions in the phenomenological study. The research questions were designed to find out the perceptions of the participants and not to find out the causes of perceptions. Additionally, the ontological and epistemological positions are explained in relation to my research along with its context and a clear rationale has been given for using an IPA approach for this research. Therefore, in adopting an IPA approach, I was able to delve deeper into the participants' lived experiences of Personal Tutoring via the perspectives of the participants and my own interpretations of these perspectives. Also, an explanation of the relationship between the research questions and methodology has been given, along with the approach taken to ensure there was an effective and ethical approach to my research.

## Chapter 3 Findings

### Introduction

In this chapter, I will present the findings following the participants' interviews and analysis using the six stages of IPA. The findings are represented separately from the discussion with literature referred to in the discussion section. I will explain the process of arriving at the themes, present some data, then the findings that emerge through their analysis, finishing with a summary of key findings.

An important point to note is that six participants were interviewed in the first round of interviews. In the follow up interviews one participant did not respond to the request to be interviewed again. Therefore only five interviews took place in the second round. In analysing the data, three superordinate themes emerged with several related subordinate themes and the data were explored to see what emerged and how it related to the research questions. The three superordinate themes are 'Information required for the Personal Tutor role,' 'Professional Development and Training' and 'Reward and Recognition for the role of Personal Tutor.'

*Table 4: Superordinate and Subordinate Themes*

Superordinate Theme	Subordinate Theme
Information required for the Personal Tutor role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The role of the Personal Tutor</li><li>• Building relationships</li><li>• Information required for the Personal Tutor role</li></ul>
Professional Development and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Induction for the Personal Tutor role</li><li>• Continuous Development for the Personal Tutor role</li><li>• Skills and Values required for the role of Personal Tutor</li></ul>

Reward and Recognition for the role of Personal Tutor	
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For ethical reasons and to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, the participants are referred to as participant A, participant B, participant C, participant D, participant E and participant F. In analysing the data, I followed the six steps of data analysis in IPA methodology (Smith et al, 2009 and Kettle, 2020) as outlined below (Table 7). The participants' responses drove the analysis in terms of using their responses as a start to analysing the data, rather than myself as the researcher having assumptions or preconceived ideas.

*Table 5: Six Steps of IPA*

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6
Reading and re-reading	Initial noting	Developing emergent themes	Searching for connections across emergent themes	Moving to the next case	Looking for patterns across cases

## Arriving at the Themes

I arrived at the themes following the iterative six steps of the IPA methodology as mentioned in the previous chapter. I revisited the individual transcripts several times, searching for emergent themes and looking for patterns. Through abstraction, subsumption and numeration, the themes began to emerge. In the data shared below, I will highlight in further detail how I arrived at the themes.

## Sample

I used a purposive, non-probability sample which consisted of six participants who were Personal Tutors in the engineering department at the University of Lawrence. In the first set of interviews, two questions referred to the experience and confidence of participants and the responses are summarised in Table 8.

*Table 6: Question: How long have participants been a Personal Tutor? At Lawrance and elsewhere? Question: How confident do you feel in doing the role in a scale of 1-10? 1 being the least confident, 10 being the most confident.*

Participant	Experience	Level of Confidence 1-10 (1 being the least confident, 10 being the most confident)
A	Personal Tutor at Lawrance for 5 years, was a Senior Colleague for 4 years	10
B	About to be a Personal Tutor (September 2020), been at Lawrance for 10 months	6
C	Personal Tutor at Lawrance for 15 years	9
D	Personal Tutor at Lawrance for 4 years and recently become a Senior Colleague	9
E	Personal Tutor at Lawrance for 6 years	8/9
F	Personal Tutor at Lawrance for 23 years and has been a tutor at other universities for 5 years	8/9

As the participants were all in the subject of Engineering, the same key thoughts were shared in terms of how Personal Tutoring is set up in Engineering. The number of tutees the participants had varied. Participant A has between 25-35; participant B – none yet; participant C – 15-20; participant D – 20; participant E- 50

- 60 and participant F – 10. In terms of the structure and organising of Personal Tutoring, in the first year of the undergraduate engineering degree, the students had a weekly maths tutorial in small groups as part of a compulsory module and three individual academic review meetings a year. In the second year, the tutees follow a discipline specific route on the engineering degree and tend to change to Personal Tutors who are in their particular engineering subject strand; they stay with these tutors for the length of their degree programme and follow the university's guidelines, which before September 2020, was one group and three individual tutorials in an academic year. The postgraduate students also follow this model of group and individual tutorials. However; as previously mentioned, from September 2020 in line with new guidelines and as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, all undergraduate year groups and postgraduate students had weekly online group tutorials and three individual tutorials in an academic year.

## **Step 1: Reading and Re-reading**

In analysing the data and finding the superordinate and subordinate themes, it was important to become familiar and immerse myself in the data (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Smith et al, 2009). This involved reading and re-reading the six interview transcripts from the first interviews and the five interview transcripts from the second interviews, as well as listening to the interview recordings. This enabled me as the researcher to ensure that my participants were at the centre of the analysis (Smith et al, 2009). In doing this, I took notes, noting down my initial thoughts and what I considered were the main points.

## **Step 2: Initial Noting**

Next, I examined the interview transcripts on a very exploratory level. This was an iterative process to find new information not found in step one (Jeong and Othman, 2016). I focused on the semantic content and the language used to capture anything of interest and I wrote notes which had a clear phenomenological focus; I did not want to lose the participants' explicit meaning. Furthermore, the comments I made were descriptive comments, which focused on describing the content of what the participant had said, the subject of the talk within the transcript; linguistic comments which focused upon exploring the specific use of language by the participant, and conceptual comments which focused on engaging at a more interrogative and conceptual level (Smith et al, 2009). In making comments, I

asked questions around what the word, phrase and sentence meant to try and make sense of what it meant for the participant.

### **Step 3: Developing Emergent Themes**

After step two, I wanted to reduce the data. In using the notes from the exploratory comments from the previous step, I created emergent themes, which were concise statements that were more focused and interpretative. Furthermore, rather than using abstract codes, I wanted the statements to be meaningful to the original transcripts as suggested by Smith et al (2009). Therefore, the themes reflected the participants' original words and thoughts alongside my own interpretation and in doing this, I thought about the research questions and literature.

### **Step 4: Searching for Connections across Themes**

This step was about the development of mapping how the emergent themes fitted together. It was a means of drawing together the emergent themes to find out the most interesting and important aspects of my participants' responses (Smith et al, 2009). As mentioned in the previous chapter, I typed all the emergent themes into a list, and highlighted themes as red, green or blue to form a group of similar themes in a table. I was then able to develop a superordinate theme from the cluster of subordinate themes. In exploring the emergent themes, I also looked for an emergent theme that could be a superordinate theme. This analytic process is what Smith et al (2009) refer to as subsumption. Indeed, this resulted in professional development and training being a superordinate theme.

### **Step 5: Moving to the next case**

This step involved repeating the previous four steps and moving on to the next participant's transcript. I was conscious as the researcher to put aside the ideas emerging from the analysis of the previous transcript; each transcript had to be considered to enable new themes to emerge.

### **Step 6: Looking for Patterns across Cases**

Step six involved looking for patterns across the transcripts to identify individual and shared meanings. The result was the identification of three superordinate themes and six subordinate themes as demonstrated above in Table 3. This step was in preparation for writing the findings, which are detailed below using the superordinate and subordinate themes as headings.



## **Superordinate Theme: Information and Knowledge Required for the Personal Tutor Role**

In the interviews, a range of views and perspectives arose in terms of the role of the Personal Tutor and the information and knowledge needed for the role. There were common perspectives, in particular the information and knowledge that would have been useful when individuals started the role of the Personal Tutor for the first time. Also, there was a sense of learning on the job for the role. In analysing the data, the subordinate themes emerged. I was then able to see a link and create the superordinate theme of information and knowledge required for the Personal Tutor role.

## **Subordinate Theme: The Role of the Personal Tutor**

I arrived at this theme by identifying common links and the frequency of these links as I analysed the data and interpreted them. The role of the Personal Tutor was mentioned by all participants; hence it became a subordinate theme. I have underlined the links I felt were important. All the participants talked about the role of the Personal Tutor and perceived the role of the Personal Tutor as a supportive role, to help and to give advice, with mentions of academic and pastoral support. Interestingly one participant likened the role to that of a GP with others seeing the role as the first point of contact. Additionally, one participant talked about the purpose of the role being about academic well-being and referred to this phrase three times. Furthermore, there were comments about the role being someone students can talk to in confidence, someone who will listen, support and advise as well as the role being a signposting role in terms of pointing the students in the right direction.

Participant A: 'Moral support, I think it's the most useful thing I have done'

Participant B: 'It (Personal Tutoring) could be anything about the teaching and learning experience...we might need to give advice about life in general.'

Participant C: 'The role is to have a personal one to one contact.....and discuss their academic progress. It is a point of contact.'

Participant D: 'It is the first point of support... to build that relationship and connection with the university. From the student's perspective, it's more about that they are being heard.'

Participant E: *'I think it is to be the first point of contact....we can sign post where to go to. I typically liken it to a GP. It is to provide personalised support... that enables them to grow holistically, so personally and professionally.'*

Participant F: *'I always used to feel that I was fobbing a student up when I told him to go to welfare or student counselling. I actually don't feel that anymore. I feel it's the most sensible thing for them to do.'*

In addition, one participant talked about the role being a way of monitoring the students and it being a surveillance. There were comments about the role being about creating a sense of belonging and community, about being a friendly face, a caring system and a preventative measure. In fact, one participant talked about a benefit of the role being about recognising the diversity of their students and therefore making steps towards improving equity and inclusion.

Participant C: *'It is about wanting them to feel connected to the university, to make them feel wanted.... to make them feel appreciated and feel like they are not alone.'*

Participant E: *'I use it a little bit like a caring system, it kind of helps me become aware of some of the issues that students are facing.... more on a preventative measure.'*

I was conscious that IPA is an iterative process and not linear. Therefore, I interviewed the participants for a second time to delve deeper into their perspectives of Personal Tutoring. I wanted to find out more about the role and the participants' perceived impact of Personal Tutoring. I also revisited the interview transcripts several times to understand the participants' lived experiences of Personal Tutoring. In considering the perceived impact of Personal Tutoring, some participants looked at the impact from the point of view of the students and the Personal Tutor. Indeed, there was a mention of the purpose of Personal Tutoring being about accountability in terms of making students feel more accountable for what they do: participant C mentioned accountability four times. Additionally, the role can provide reassurance, clarification, guidance and confidence for students, as mentioned by participants. Furthermore, many participants talked about the fact that Personal Tutoring can '*really make a difference*' to a student's university experience and in particular, impact student retention; however, one participant commented that they thought the impact on student retention was '*very small*',

whereas others felt strongly that there is a definite impact on student retention. The participants' responses in my interpretations supported the themes of the role of the Personal Tutor.

Participant A: '*The impact on student retention, I would say is very, very small.*'

Participant C: '*Absolutely, there is an impact on retention, it comes from giving people meaning and purpose ..... and having a friendly person contributes to that.*'

Participant D: '*It directly feeds into student retention, student experience and student satisfaction. It (the Personal Tutor role) is satisfying... if you know you have helped a student overcome a struggle, overcome any hurdle, the satisfaction is enormous. You see them graduate and you know you've been part of their journey.*'

Participant E: '*At the most extreme level, students get a real degree of support. We really help them get through difficult situations. A student might be thinking, I can't handle this, I'm gonna drop out, but maybe a conversation with their Personal Tutor would help them work things out. Even if it means a student moves a course or an institution, they'll still be able to progress.*'

Participant F: '*It impacts student retention. I could give you personal examples... who (students) said they were thinking of leaving.....I have done things as a tutor which have helped them carry on and they've been grateful for.*'

What is more, a positive impact of Personal Tutoring on Personal Tutors is the relationship between tutor and tutee and in terms of tutors getting to know their tutees, this will be explored further on in the subordinate theme: building relationships.

Most of the participants started in the role of the Personal Tutor as soon as they started teaching, apart from participant B who had been teaching for three years and was expecting tutees later in the year. Participant A's feelings about doing the role of the Personal Tutor were around being worried and their comments implied that they thought the role might be difficult. In addition, several times in the interview, participant A talked about the role being '*a little bit daunting*' and repeated this, as they said '*it was a little daunting because it was my first-time*

teaching...' Again, further, on they stated, '*I can imagine for colleagues that are starting (the role) without any formal training it can be quite daunting*.' In fact, they went on further to say that there was an expectation that new colleagues were to be Personal Tutors within weeks of starting at the university; they talked about the role being '*a journey, you learn by experience that definitely happened to me.*'

In the second interviews, in following the iterative process of IPA, I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants at the beginning when they were new to Personal Tutoring, particularly, what their thoughts and feelings were as a new Personal Tutor. Again this highlighted the theme of the role of the Personal Tutor.

Participant C: '*I thought it was more..... I thought it was a deeper role than it is. I thought it was more about making a deeper connection with individual tutees. I don't really see it like that now.*'

Participant D: '*I am not from this country, I didn't have a Personal Tutor, so I honestly didn't know what a Personal Tutor does. Uh, nobody told me what you are expected to do with this student. I was just told, these are your personal tutees and that's it, and I didn't know.*'

Participant E: '*I am not qualified to do that. But, then I reflected a bit more and thought – I had a couple of horrible Personal Tutors. I'll do a better job than that!*'

Participant F: '*I think to be honest when I first started I was, I didn't really know what I had to do when I first started. I think I was a bit banging around in the dark. Er I guess, I to be honest, I sometimes thought of it as a bit of an inconvenience.*'

There were opposing views in the interviews about the time involved in doing the Personal Tutor role, with participant B as a new Personal Tutor feeling positive about the role but under the impression from colleagues that the role takes a lot of time. They commented that the role '*takes a lot of time and actually heard of story from other colleagues about it's quite time consuming and especially in our department.*' However, participant A is clear in stating that they do not find the role '*overly time-consuming*'; they went on further to talk about staff perspectives and that '*some people have this perspective that it is going take me endless of hours etc...*'

Furthermore, Participant E shared their frustrations with the role; they commented that there is 'a big difference in what Personal Tutoring can and should do and can do for the student and how it's valued by the student.' They also mentioned the challenges with student engagement in Personal Tutoring, as did participant D as below. These comments relate to the role of the Personal Tutor and doing the role.

Participant E: '*With sort of mid performing students there's a very low engagement with Personal Tutoring...in terms of post-grad students I get a range of sort of engagement.*'

Participant D: '*In the 20-30 students, not everyone turns up.*'

In the second interview with participants, I wanted to explore more deeply the concept of the perceived time it takes to do the Personal Tutor role as there were mixed views, as noted above. However, there were similar thoughts in terms of the number of tutees a Personal Tutor has and the impact on the time it takes to do the role, alongside comments that the time factor is also dependent on the needs of students. Participant D talks about in the past colleagues having a high number of tutees and that now the department tries to allocate fewer than 30 tutees to each Personal Tutor but recognises at times that this can be 'tricky, because you know, with staff constraints.'

Participant A: '*I have 40 tutees, it is obviously that it is time is dependent on the number of tutees that you have.*'

Participant D: '*It (time) depends more on the number of tutees you have..... it depends upon the struggles if, if there are more students, who are, you know, going through hard times or tough time and they need more support, and then obviously the time commitment would be more. On the other hand, if you have, say 25 students but only a couple of them have issues, you need to spend more time with them.*'

Participant F: '*We don't get time allocated to it (Personal Tutoring) in a serious way.*'

Some participants were clear that the role does not take up too much of their time and actually quantified the time it takes for them to do the role. However, one participant felt that time pressures have increased due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

Participant A: *'If you look at the overall picture, it's (Personal Tutoring) not a very, very large proportion of your time..... I think the overall percentage I mean, if I was to give you a figure maybe five percent of the time.'*

Participant C: *'The time itself is not a big deal. I mean, it's it's half an hour isn't it?'*

Participant D: *'We do tend to have on an average two days, two full days in one term, just for Personal Tutoring two full days. I would say a term, if everything is alright.'*

Participant E: *'More students are relying more and more on technology (due to the pandemic), which means that it's easy to fire out a quick email.... and ask for a meeting when possibly in the past, an individual, might be more likely to send a link via Canvas (VLE). I think the demand is, the amount of questions coming in, they definitely have increased. It's not an enormous demand, I would say it's a constant trickle.'*

Despite the comment above, participant C also said that they felt Personal Tutoring could be a burden. Furthermore, they state *'it's not very onerous..... it's just to me it's not a big deal.'* Additionally, participant E talks about the weekly online group tutorials being fine in terms of time pressures; they also talk about emails being *'a little bit easier to deal with'* than telephone calls. The data and commentary support the subordinate theme of the role of the Personal Tutor.

## **Subordinate Theme: Building Relationships**

All the participants talked about the role of Personal Tutor being about building relationships with their students and the importance of the Personal Tutor-tutee relationship. Furthermore, most of the participants highlighted the relationships with their tutees as a positive aspect of the role, and that the role is about making connections with students in a way that they would not usually do in teaching. In addition, they also talked about the relationship being a reciprocal relationship and about getting to know their students. Therefore, in searching for connections across emergent themes and revisiting the interview transcripts, I chose the subordinate theme of building relationships to capture the participants' views. I have highlighted key words in yellow which I have interpreted to fit with this theme.

Participant A: *'I guess I started to build up a relationship with them....you really feel you have built up that relationship with them as individuals.'*

Participant B: *'A little trust can be built.'*

Participant C: *'You do actually make a personal connection with students.... I think tutoring is one of the better parts of student interactions....you can't really strike up not a personal relationship or a deep relationship with a student. It is being able to have a professional but personal relationship with students so that you can tease out what the issues are. The interesting part for me for the Personal Tutorial is the personal relationship.'*

Participant F: *'It's very much about relationships.'*

In delving deeper into Personal Tutors' perceptions of Personal Tutoring in the second interviews, relationships were mentioned again. Participant A talked about Personal Tutors being a '*friendly face*' for students and went on further as below.

Participant A: *'There's also the aspect of having a ... working relationship with your tutee (to the role). Personal Tutors and tutees develop a very good working relationship.'*

Participant C mentioned the relationship in a supportive way, saying, '*there's somebody who has got your (tutee) back. And if they think there's somebody on the academic staff who's got their back, they might feel better and more confident.*'

In addition, participant D states that Personal Tutoring is '*that connection, when you see students as an academic in a lecture theatre, you don't have that connection with the students.*' They go on further to share that through the connection to personal tutees as a Personal Tutor helps in understanding the tutees better. Similarly, participant E talks about getting to know their students and in fact allowing students to get to know them '*we can get to know them, and I think probably by supporting settling students it allows them to see us, doesn't it?'*

There are explicit comments about relationships as well as less explicit in terms of making connections with students, getting to know them, building trust, and supporting students; this supports the subordinate theme of building relationships.

## **Subordinate Theme: Information Required for the Personal Tutor Role**

In terms of this theme, the participants commented on the challenges of finding and accessing the information and resources to support them in the Personal

Tutor role and in particular, they mentioned accessing information and resources online. The participants who were more experienced in the Personal Tutor role talked about how they relied on experienced colleagues for help initially and how they now see themselves as those experienced colleagues. However, for new and inexperienced Personal Tutors, the consensus was that it is difficult to find and access information to support the role. There were comments of an awareness of a Canvas (virtual learning environment) site from participants. Again, key words and comments are highlighted in yellow.

Participant A: *'I think there is obviously Canvas... that has developed more.'*

Participant F: *'The personal academic tutors canvas stuff isn't that which we have all been made aware of?'*

Additionally, participants commented that finding information and resources was difficult and that knowing how to get to the information was a challenge. Furthermore, in trying to find out any information on student support, such as student well-being, many of the participants talked about using 'google' as a better way of getting to the university website rather than doing a university search on the website.

Participant A: *'The key thing is information, but sometimes it can be difficult to find.'*

Participant C: *'I don't know how to contact the welfare people at all I mean, I google it like anybody else.'*

Participant E: *'Information is all over the place. I find the University of Lawrance website really, really difficult to navigate.... there's so many facets around it.' They also said 'a typical colleague has no idea how to access university support systems. I just google it (information), I don't even bother to search the university website.'*

Participant F: *'It's a question of finding which bit of the website or the intranet they're (information)on. One of the challenges is going through the links (on the website), if the pages change your links go.'*

Furthermore, participant C said: *'I know is there is this thing called student welfare, I don't know if it is called student welfare services, student services?'*

To add to this, participant D made a point that the information needed is 'definitely'



on the university website. As an experienced Personal Tutor and a senior colleague, they are the colleague who Personal Tutors go to for support and advice, and commented that the *'information is in my head.'* They also made the following comments reiterating their point several times at different points in the interview.

Participant D: *'I didn't have a clue (about the role of the Personal Tutor).'*

*'I didn't have any clue about how Personal Tutoring works.'*

*'When I began, I didn't have a clue.'*

In addition, they stressed the point of how they felt as a new Personal Tutor and that they did not feel they knew what the role was about, how to do it or how it worked, and received no guidance to support the role. Also, there was a mention of student handbooks as a source of information and an awareness of student services, and them being accessible via the university website.

Participant A: *'I think what's helped, helped over the last few years has been a very present well-being team. That's helped because a lot of the queries are well-being related.'*

Participant B: *'I know well-being officer will be able to help me.'*

Participant C: *'Well, there is the counselling services, if you want to talk to more peers, go to the guild (student union).'*

Participant F: *'I guess I would look at student services on the university website.'*

Moreover, the participants made some suggestions; they suggested that having one resource to support Personal Tutoring would be helpful and for it to be organised into sections that staff could quickly scan through to find what they need. And rather than general emails for students support services, it would be helpful to have a named person to contact.

Participant F: *'As a tutor, it would be nicer to be more easily be able to talk to someone in, say, academic services. So..... you didn't have to use a general email address.'*

Participant D: *'If there is one kind of space say, on campus page where all this Personal Tutoring information is, then we know where to go. And then*

*obviously it would be organised into different sections and we should be able to scan through it.'*

Furthermore, Participant F talked about a list of internet links to tell Personal Tutors where information is being a useful resource, as well as stating that *'the first thing to know is where you're going to answer their questions.'*

In addition, there were suggestions that having previous experience of supporting students helped with the role and that tutors need to get to know their tutees and understand their background. Also, there was a mention of knowing the university systems and the degree programme as well as career options.

Participant C: *'I suppose the knowledge, the knowledge of drawing on previous, previous students and how well they're doing.'* They also said *'I suppose the knowledge...what their potential futures are drawing on your own experience and giving them your perspective. Tell them their potential route to career and encourage them to maximise their opportunities at university.'*

Participant D: *'They (tutors) need to understand the different backgrounds of the students because they come from different cultures and they have different mindsets.'*

There were a range of responses relating to the superordinate theme of information required for the Personal Tutor role. There were similar views about the role being about supporting students. Participants talked about not really knowing what they had to do when they started the role. In terms of the time it takes to do the role, there were differences in perspectives from, there is *'little time to do the role'* to *'the time itself not being a big deal.'* There was consensus about the Personal Tutor role being about relationships and getting to know students. Finally, there were noted challenges around tutors accessing and finding the information they need to carry out the role.

## **Superordinate Theme: Professional Development and Training**

During the interviews, the participants described the different experiences they had in terms of development, training, and support for the role of the Personal Tutor. Indeed, there were several similarities across participants and the need for development, training, and support. In analysing the data and arriving at

subordinate themes below, I realised there was a link which created the superordinate theme of professional development and training.

## **Subordinate Theme: Induction for the Personal Tutor Role**

Almost all the participants commented on the fact that they received no formal induction or development for the Personal Tutor role. Participant F had worked at other institutions where they did not have an induction for the role or any support, but he did at Lawrance. Key words and comments are highlighted that relate to induction for the Personal Tutor role. There were comments about informal inductions as seen below:

Participant A: *'I think there is informal training, new tutors are given a handbook and introduced to the Senior Tutor.'*

Participant E: *'I think I received a word document about what it (personal academic tutoring) was.'*

In fact, participant A talked about 'learning on the job,' and new Personal Tutors 'learn as they go along.' And that new Personal Tutors did not know what the role was about or how to do the role, they suggested that some initial training for new Personal Tutors 'would be very helpful.'

In highlighting the data, I was able to extract the theme of induction for the Personal Tutor role, and the fact there was little induction. As part of the iterative process of IPA, I revisited and built on this theme in the second interviews. Participant B felt strongly about induction for new Personal Tutors and felt it was important because as a new Personal Tutor themselves. They said: 'new personal academic tutors don't know what to do, they haven't been properly taught about what should be done.'

Similarly, participant C agreed that some sort of induction 'would definitely help' and participant F mentioned that induction would be useful 'as to where to find the information for this university, because often that's all students really ask – how do I find?' They go on further to discuss that as an academic tutor in terms of the teaching role, it is difficult to separate that role from the Personal Tutor role. In addition, they add that a challenge of being a new Personal Tutor is dealing with

students' emotional issues. This is further support for the theme of induction for the Personal Tutor.

Participant D is a senior colleague, and they plan to give staff new to the Personal Tutor role an introductory talk and guide them through the process of Personal Tutoring. Furthermore, they felt this was important and wanted to give Personal Tutors *'an idea of how it (tutoring) works and what they should do.'* In addition, they believed that if staff know whom to ask in the school for information, then they are supported. In terms of being a new Personal Tutor, participant D talked about how staff are not very confident, particularly the first time they met their tutees and suggested that this could be due to a lack of induction. It is these comments that I analysed to arrive at the theme.

Furthermore, participant E took it upon themselves as a senior colleague in their area to run a specific training session on Personal Tutoring and created a pack to support tutors on where to signpost tutees to. They also mentioned a lack of confidence among staff starting the role as well as their ability *'to quickly direct the students to the right place.'* They go on further to state: *'I strongly believe that there should be an induction, we can do it (the role) without it, yes, but they (Personal Tutors) can do it better and more efficiently.'*

In addition, Participant F talked about a challenge for new Personal Tutors being about knowing the kind of things that their tutees might ask, and what the sources of information are. They indicated that this knowledge comes from experience, and comment *'I think it's quite tricky, actually doing induction for tutoring.'* They went on further to suggest that as well as new Personal Tutors needing guidance on what tutoring is, that development and training on how to talk to students would be useful alongside guidance focused on *'how not to offend people and how to draw them out in the group discussion.'*

Most of the participants articulated that they felt some kind of induction development or support was needed for the Personal Tutor role. They mentioned that there should be formal development and training for the role. Furthermore, participant A talked about formal development that could be delivered by Senior Management such as the Head of School, Head of Education and Senior Tutor, whereas participant E suggested an online resource for induction, something interactive at departmental and school level. It is these data and thoughts that

helped me decide on the subordinate theme of induction for the Personal Tutor role.

## **Subordinate Theme: Continuous Development for the Role of Personal Tutor**

When asked about continuous support and development for the role of Personal Tutor, four out of five of the experienced Personal Tutors said they received no continuous support or development for the role. Moreover, there were mixed views as to whether experienced Personal Tutors should have continuous development for the role. Indeed, participants A and D had similar views and felt that most experienced Personal Tutors would not be keen on any development or support for the role; they both talked about staff feeling that they do not need any development or support. This analysis was based on the highlighted comments and enabled the creation of the subordinate theme, whether participants supported the need for continuous development or not.

Participant A: *'I think the way things are, we don't have to have anything new then we probably don't need to have any training.'*

Participant D: *'I think the majority of staff wouldn't be very keen because they understand what they need to do and they don't find anything difficult.'*

Participant A, in particular, stated that as an experienced and confident Personal Tutor they were not sure of any development or support that would benefit them; they support colleagues and colleagues go to them for support. On the other hand, both A and D thought that an annual refresher would be useful for an update, especially if there were changes to the Personal Tutoring system or new resources available.

For experienced Personal Tutors, participant E recommended a refresher development session as a source of continuous support for tutors and likens the role to a PhD supervisor. Participant C went on further to say that a development session should have a particular focus.

Participant E: *'I think we should have refreshers you know, you got to have refresher training to be a PhD supervisor.'*

Participant C: *'I think a dos and don'ts possible, dos and don'ts type of training of erm you know ways of seeing students, possible bits on boundaries and things potentially what can go wrong.'*

Additionally, participant E had asked for development and support for the role, but this has never happened, and they felt a development session could be recorded online for staff to access anytime. In fact, participant F is the only participant who stated that they receive continuous development and support for the role; they said that they use the Canvas site and felt expectations were clear and that they received regular communication from the Senior Tutor, who is supportive.

Participant F: *'We have a, the personal academic tutors canvas stuff isn't that which we have all been made aware of. We get e-mails and messages from the school senior tutor to what we're supposed to do with reminders about that, in the past we've had things like suggestions of topics of discussion this week. I kind of think. So the expectations of what we're supposed to do are quite clear.'*

In recommending development, participants D and E made suggestions as below with D stating sessions should not be mandatory and conversely, E stated that sessions should be compulsory.

Participant D: *'I think that there could be different training sessions throughout the year, maybe two or three, where they (Personal Tutors) can sign up if they wanted to. Rather than, you know, asking them that it's mandatory for them to attend training.... I think I'd like different sessions throughout the year, like two or three sessions on one target to well-being another targeted to signposting to find different issues or identify different issues. You know, if different sessions cover different aspects of things, then maybe tutors might be Personal Tutors just might be excited to sign up and see how to deal with different kinds of issues rather than just how it looks like, what are your expectations?'*

Participant E: *'I think there should be interactive training sessions and then kind of update sessions every three years. And I think that should be compulsory.'*

In the second round of interviews, I explored further and more deeply in terms of what the focus could be for development sessions, and these included how to create a sense of belonging and community for personal tutees, managing boundaries and setting expectations, supporting students with personal issues and meeting the diverse needs of their tutees. Due to the pandemic and Covid-19

situation Personal Tutorials were online, so the findings are focused on the online environment.

In terms of creating a sense of belonging and community, the participants' comments are below. This focuses on using technology such as cameras, chat functions and social media.

Participant A: *'So one of the ways we've, we've tried to do it is through trying to encourage them (the students)... to turn cameras on as a start, which is not easy. I also try to get them to, to speak to each other.'*

Participant C: *'I have suggested tutees create and use a WhatsApp group, in an online tutorial I encourage them to stay on the call and I leave them, I send them to breakout rooms to have a discussion. You could encourage some sort of group activity outside of the session. I encourage them to join a society.'*

Participant D: *'Our weekly online group tutorials the main motive of those is to you know form that community. They (tutees) have created WhatsApp groups amongst themselves and they are supporting each other. Most of the students do switch their cameras on and are willing to speak so, so I think it's (online tutorials) working well.'*

Participant E: *'I really encourage them to talk to one another, so I say you know, use the private chat function. Now swap numbers with each other and get in touch with each other I reiterate again and again that they are the most valuable resources throughout their degree and that will continue after it is going to be their peers.'*

Participant F: *'A round table discussion had worked very well.'*

The above analysis talks about aspects of development and the possible content that could be included in development sessions, which is how the subordinate theme was arrived at.

Participant E went on further to say that students support each other and form their own networks sometimes via study sessions. They commented that the students feel a sense of belonging to the department but highlight that for some students, e.g., commuter and part time students, a sense of institutional belonging is difficult. Additionally, participants shared how they manage boundaries and set expectations.

Participant A: *'I would say for me it's come quite naturally. I don't think I've haven't had to set any boundaries to be fair. I can't really think of a situation where I've had to set boundaries. To be honest. That's fine.'*

Participant C: *'I suppose that's an expectation, to check attendance. In terms of boundaries, and expectations I think the online has been a couple, there's a couple of there's one there was one incident which was quite uncomfortable and that was early on when people still thought they had to put their cameras. And what I noticed is people put the cameras on if I've got my camera on. They feel compelled to do so. And I didn't really feel comfortable talking to people in their bedrooms in the university at all. I mean, you could argue that was a struggle with boundaries because we're talking to people in their bedrooms.'*

Participant C shared how uncomfortable they felt because of a student who had barely any clothes on and as a result they now often ask students not to turn their cameras on. Likewise, participant E shared how they set clear expectations.

Participant E: *'I don't tend to reply to student emails during the weekend. I'll get lots of Facebook friend requests, they're ignored. On some occasions it's been necessary to share my phone number, I try to be really strict, so I ignore it if it's not on a work day. Sometimes I do get them at 7-8 PM at night. I always answer it. Because I never know that it's a student calling me, then I just answer I am not working at the moment. Please email me and I'll address your query within working hours.'*

Participant F: *'I think the expectations of a student in an online tutorial have become clearer as we've gone through. But the expectations about using the microphones and not using the chat and stuff, I think it is long as long as one has set those early on that's all been fine in the tutorials.'*

There were a range of responses from participants from not needing to set expectations to mentioning the challenges of setting expectations in an online environment. To add to this, the issue of emails being instant and students using social media to contact tutors was discussed.

Participants were asked for their thoughts on EDI development and training to support tutees who have personal issues and challenges; well-being and mental health were aspects talked about.



Participant A: *'Definitely training is needed, personal issues come up more and more often now, just generally in particular well-being and mental health, I think it comes up more and more frequently and academic staff generally, they don't have the training. You know, staff just need to know what to do just in terms of pointing them in the right direction or having knowing where to go to.'*

Participant D: *'Yes, development for supporting tutees with personal issues would be really useful for tutors. If they've just started and they are in and you know that emotional burst. And they're talking about their personal issues, how does the tutor, how should you deal with that? You don't want them to stop saying, they want to say because they want somebody to listen to. But how do you tackle that situation? So, I think some training some advice for the tutors would be really beneficial for them.'*

Participant E: *'I think there should be like an almost quick guide, their symptoms come up and where or who to send to kind of thing.'*

A need for development and training focusing on EDI was identified, and thoughts vary from having a 'quick guide' to having a more formal development and training session. In considering perceptions about development and training to support and cater for the diverse needs of students, participants shared their thoughts.

Participant A: *'I definitely think that it is quite challenging with international students, on zoom, teams, etc. I have I've supervised a couple of groups at the moment and that is definitely a challenge. And then I guess potentially develop some training. Yes, as I was saying, encouraging turning your cameras on, so again, tried to build that community amongst them. So they had to talk to each other. They had to decide things.'*

Participant C: *'To be honest with you, sometimes when a particular student has come to me with a problem. I've just said that you just need to go and see student services. It's almost throwing them over, I have no idea what student services are going to say to them I just assume there will be something that will deal with a specific issue. Like a rent problem or, you know, personal issues. The point is, is that I don't know. All I know is there is this thing called student welfare.'*

Participant D: *'I think that engagement is affected in the online world, but I wouldn't say that was affected when we were face to face. It was different until last year.'*

Participant E: *'I think it should be part of mandatory training.'*

Participant F: *'What we need as tutors is an understanding or awareness of the different situations that students are in, I don't think it was obvious to me when I first started. If students have got families, if students are traveling in every day, this kind of thing, so you know they're not all in the same situation. And then many are eighteen and just out of school. Yeah. An' I think that is probably. In terms of extra awareness about diversity of student situations for Personal Tutoring, I think it's probably the awareness that's most important.'*

I analysed and interpreted the above comments to be useful for development and training. They support the subordinate theme of continuous development and the overarching superordinate theme of professional development and training.

In the second set of interviews, two questions were asked in relation to professional development; the responses are summarised in the table on the next page. In terms of interest in the UKAT Professional Recognition Scheme, the responses vary from a definite no, to maybe, to one participant who has already signed up for the scheme.

*Table 9: Question: Are you aware of the United Kingdom Advising and Tutoring (UKAT) Personal Tutoring association? Question: UKAT have a professional recognition scheme for Personal Tutoring, is this something you would be interested in?*

Participant	UKAT	UKAT Professional Recognition
A	Yes	Not now, certainly in the future
C	No	Would consider
D	Yes	Would consider but has not the time at the moment
E	Yes	Has signed up to do the scheme
F	No	No

## Subordinate Theme: Skills and Values Required for the Role of Personal Tutor

There were a range of perspectives that participants shared in terms of skills and values required to be a Personal Tutor. Participants A and B highlighted that Personal Tutors are not expected or going to know everything that they need to do the role, and that as a tutor they need to know when to ask for help. Key words and phrases that I analysed to create the subordinate theme are highlighted.

Participant A: *'it (Personal Tutoring) is just being human..... and having that ability to realise that you are not going to know everything. We all have different needs and be willing to go and ask for help'*

Participant B: *'sometimes, they (personal academic tutors) may not know how to deal with all situations. It is probably good for someone else to get some help.'*

In discussing skills and values of the Personal Tutor, a range of words were highlighted, which included: being honest, being helpful, sensitive, patience, communication, empathy, listening skills, openness, approachability, non-judgemental, being human, respectful, having time for your tutees and treating them as individuals.

Participant A: *'In terms of skills: communication, compassion..... it is just being human... And then linked to values is about, you know being respectful towards them (tutees) as individuals and having time and showing that you know, that I've got time for you..... it is all about being human at the end of the day.'*

Participant B: *'Patience.'*

Participant C: *'I suppose counselling skills, which is listening, I suppose counselling skills would be the catch all.'*

Participant D: *'I think good listening ear, patience to listen to their students and to be compassionate rather than not be judgemental to be honest, yes, that's really important..... So not to be judgmental.'*

Participant E: *'I think patience, openness, approachability.'*

Participant F: *'I think some degree of empathy.... being sensitive.'*

In summarising the findings for the superordinate theme professional development and training, the responses suggest that there is a need for new Personal Tutors to have an induction for the role. There are mixed views about continuous professional development for the Personal Tutor role which are based around the experiences of the Personal Tutor. Also, there are opposing views in terms of development and training being mandatory. A range of skills and values which have a similar theme are highlighted for the Personal Tutor role.

## **Superordinate Theme: Reward and Recognition for the Role of Personal Tutor**

All the participants felt that there is no reward or recognition for the Personal Tutor role at an institutional level, but that there is at a personal level. In fact, participant B laughed when asked the question and participant F talked about there being no benefit professionally in doing the Personal Tutor role. This theme emerged from analysing the data through an iterative process and I felt that the theme was a superordinate theme in its own.

Participant F: *'I don't think there's any advantage to you professionally in the university, to being a good Personal Tutor.'*

Furthermore, participants A, B, C and F talked about the reward for the role of Personal Tutor being a personal reward; participant A mentioned this twice.

Participant A: *'The reward for me comes from my tutees rather than the university.... I think the reward definitely would come from my tutees.'*

Participant B: *'it, (Personal Tutoring) might get some respect from the student, that is it.'*

Participant C: *'The reward would be they (tutees) have realised their potential, did you help them do that?'*

Participant F: *'The main reward is a personal one.'*

Participant D, as a senior colleague, felt that they are rewarded as stated:

*'I think the rule in itself is because you're recognised throughout the school, which is definitely rewarding..... everyone knows you which in itself is rewarding.'*

The participants shared some thoughts in terms of how the role could be rewarded, such as having a dedicated award for Personal Tutoring as a sense of

competition for others and for tutors to work and aim for. The Guild (student union) Teaching Awards and the Higher Education Futures institute (HEFi) awards were mentioned as a forum for a Personal Tutoring award as well as something at school or college level.

Participant D: *'You might give some Personal Tutors, you know, a sense of competition to work towards and then reward and seeing others being rewarded then they try their best.'*

Participant E: *'I think there could be you know, they have the Guild Teaching Awards, the HEFi awards could have a Personal Tutor award. It could be within a school or a college it would be nice if it were on a school level, because then you'd actually stand a chance.'*

The key theme emerging from these data is reward, hence the superordinate theme. There were suggestions from the interviews that Personal Tutoring should be recognised as part of promotion criteria and workload allocation and planning, with a recommendation of the role being part of the annual personal development review (PDR) appraisal process.

Participant A: *'I think really it should be part of our, in some form of when you apply for promotion... I have had so many (tutees) graduate successfully....I've got evidence of impact, so that it has got a bit more weight alongside your teaching and your research, it should be part of your PDR as well.'*

Participant E: *'I think it (Personal Tutoring) should be in the work allocation model, the work recognition model. I think there should be a set number for, the number that you can expect. I think it should be incremental and grow as you start your career.'*

Participant F: *'I think it (Personal Tutoring) should be seen as part of your teaching allocation. It needs to be formally built within a structure.'*

In analysing and revisiting the data, I realised an emerging theme was reward and recognition for the Personal Tutor role. In the second interviews, I took the suggestions above for reward and recognition and asked participants whether they agreed or disagreed or had anything to add. The suggestions are the three statements below:

A) The role should be recognised as part of promotion criteria.

B) The role should be recognised as part of workload allocation and planning.

C) A recommendation of the role being part of the annual personal development review (PDR) appraisal process.

In responding to A, four of the participants (A, D, E and F) agreed with this statement, and participant D talks about Personal Tutors having an impact on the students, whereas participant C's response was that they are not sure. In explaining why, they commented '*I don't know what would be a good and a bad example of Personal Tutoring and so, I am not sure about it, I don't know what the performance measure be.*' Similarly, participant A stated '*I think you have to be a little bit careful that you don't request too much of it in the promotion part here, because you've got to appreciate that we all do tutoring in a different way between schools, etc. But you've got to be careful. Because it depends on what your role as a Personal Tutor is about. And so, for example, I wouldn't say I can't identify that I've made a student become more employable'*

All participants agree with statement B with comments of '*definitely*' and '*100%*'. And participant A adds more and makes the point that workload allocation should be dependent on the number of tutees Personal Tutors have.

For statement C, participant E said yes. The others made a few comments as below and participant A was not sure.

Participant A: '*I don't think any of my PDRs, I don't think I normally mention Personal Tutoring in there. Normally your PDR is about your objectives, your previous year for your future. So I'm trying to think, I don't know how that would work.*'

Participant C: '*I think that's quite good idea. I do think there is no real accountability for what you've done as a Personal Tutor.*'

Participant D: '*Of course yes, because, if you have examples of how we have impacted a student you know and their experience here, definitely should be a part of PDR as well.*'

In terms of anything to add, participant D suggested an award for the role of Personal Tutor at school or university level and that Personal Tutors could share examples of good practice in tutoring. They also said: '*not everybody takes*

*Personal Tutoring seriously, but if it's rewarded if it's recognised, I'm sure that will increase the participation from the academic side as well.'* Similarly, participant E mentioned an award to *'help kind of cement the value of engaging in it as a member of staff.'*

And finally, from Participant F: *'I think the important part is to recognise it's, it's an expected duty of every member of staff and that it's an important function of the institution and therefore it should be treated as such.'*

The participants' responses indicate that there is no reward and recognition from the HE institution but that there is a personal reward. There were similar views in terms of Personal Tutoring being recognised in workload models, and mixed views about tutoring being part of the PDR process and promotion criteria.

In addition to the findings from the phenomenological study, the findings from the pilot study demonstrated different understandings of the Personal Tutor role as well as highlighting the challenges of the role and a lack of support for the role in terms of development and training. There was a consensus that the role has a pastoral element, a form of pastoral interaction, a concern for a student's general welfare and that it is to deliver pastoral care. There were views that the Personal Tutor role is about the 'academic side of things', supporting transition and that there is a responsibility of the tutor to signpost students to various support services. Various challenges of the role were highlighted including consistency, tutor to tutee ratio and the challenges of supporting tutees who appear to have mental health issues. Developing relationships was a theme in the pilot study findings, participants talked about the importance of getting to know tutees.

There were a range of perspectives in terms of professional development and training, all the participants commented that they had no official development or training for the Personal Tutor role. However, some did say that they had informal support from colleagues.

The findings from the evaluation of online weekly group tutorials are summarised as follows:

- The tutorials helped Personal Tutors feel part of a community.
- The tutorials helped prevent small problems from getting bigger.

- The tutorials improved communication between tutor and tutees by removing barriers and improving dialogue.
- Personal Tutors indicated a need for staff development for tutors.
- Students indicated that they would prefer online tutorials after the pandemic.
- Students report that they appreciated the regular support.

In the report for Online Group Tutorials report, evaluations from Personal Tutors indicate further development and support is needed. The development of skills for the Personal Tutor was highlighted as a need as well as supporting developing confidence as a Personal Tutor.

## Summary

In using the six steps of IPA to analyse the data, the participants' responses drove the analysis; and through the iterative process of IPA, I was able to identify emerging themes and share my thought processes. This resulted in the superordinate and subordinate themes. The further sources of data, the pilot study, the evaluation of weekly online group tutorials and the Online Group Tutorials report support the emerging themes.

All the participants talked about the role of the Personal Tutor being a supportive role, whether that is for academic or pastoral support; they see the role as being personal and about one to one contact. Furthermore, they discussed the role in terms of building relationships and getting to know students. Apparent throughout the participants' responses was the need for a system to find and access the information needed for the role of the Personal Tutor. They faced challenges in accessing the information via the university's website, which they found overwhelming; they all use Google to find the information they need. Interestingly, all participants reported that they had not received any formal development or training for the role but there were differences in forms of informal inductions and development they had experienced for the role.

In considering continuous professional development, opposing views were expressed as to whether experienced Personal Tutors should have this kind of ongoing development. In addition, there were comments of continuous development not being mandatory and on the other hand being compulsory. There were comments about EDI development/training being mandatory. With thoughts



about tutors needing to know how to support tutees' emotional issues, personal issues, well-being, and mental health. In addition, international students were mentioned and the importance of recognising and being aware of the diversity of students. In the pilot study a lack of development and training for the role was highlighted. In support the evaluation of online weekly group tutorials also highlighted the need for staff development. Moreover, a range of skills and values were recommended for the role of the Personal Tutor, including the suggestion of being human. To add to this from the Online Group Tutorials report developing confidence as a Personal Tutor was recommended as development. And, in terms of reward and recognition for the role, there was a consensus that at an institutional level there is no reward or recognition for the role, with one participant laughing when asked the question. In fact, one participant said, '*I don't think there's any great advantage to you professionally in the university, to being a good Personal Tutor.*' It came across that the reward or recognition for the role is very much a personal one and it is felt through the students' achievements.

The key findings are that participants perceived the Personal Tutor role to be about both academic and pastoral support, which relates to Earwaker's (1992) pastoral model. But the university's definition of the role is to support academic progress and personal development (University of Lawrance, 2020). The next key findings are that the information required to perform the Personal Tutor role is not always accessible or available and to add to this there is a lack of development and training for the Personal Tutor role. And finally, there is a lack of reward and recognition for the role from the institution.

# Chapter 4 Discussion

## Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss my findings in relation to the literature and previous research on Personal Tutoring, and how the findings contribute to the recommendations to advance the theory and knowledge of Personal Tutoring alongside advancing Personal Tutoring practice. The aim of the study was to gain a greater understanding of tutors' perceptions of Personal Tutoring, and my research aimed to address the following research questions:

- What are tutors' perspectives of the role of the Personal Tutor?
- How does an HE institution support the development of Personal Tutors?
- How does an HE institution reward and recognise the role of the Personal Tutor?
- What model of Personal Tutoring could HE institutions use to better support Personal Tutors?

The discussion draws out the findings with reference to the three superordinate themes identified in the findings; information required for the Personal Tutor role; professional development and training; and reward and recognition for the role of the Personal Tutor that emerged from the IPA data analysis.

## Superordinate Theme: Information Required for the Personal Tutor Role

In this section, I discuss the findings related to the superordinate theme of Personal Tutoring in terms of the information required for the Personal Tutor role. This also includes an understanding of the Personal Tutor role, the importance of building relationships and the information required for the Personal Tutor role. The findings are explored in relation to the literature review.

## Subordinate Theme: The Role of the Personal Tutor

### Models of Personal Tutoring

Personal Tutoring in engineering for the first year undergraduate students is based around Earwaker's (1992) curriculum model, as the students have a weekly timetabled tutorial for maths and are taught by their Personal Tutors (Thomas, 2012; Stevenson, 2009; Sosabowski et al, 2003; Owen, 2002). As a reminder, the role of the Personal Academic Tutor at the institution is focused on academic

support (University of Lawrance, 2020). Until September 2020, the structure of Personal Tutoring for the remaining undergraduates and postgraduates was one group and three individual tutorials. The Personal Tutor role at Lawrance is to support academic progress and personal development. The models seen in the literature are, the pastoral model, in which an academic provides guidance on pastoral and moral issues as well as academic support (Basset et al, 2014; Myers, 2008; Thomas, 2006, Elander, 2003; Smith, 2007 and Earwaker, 1992), or a professional model of tutoring, in which Personal Tutoring is centred around the provision of student services and professionally trained staff who take on the role of a Personal Tutor on a full-time basis (Thomas, 2006; Earwaker, 1992). The institution's approach is not based on the curriculum model in which Personal Tutoring is timetabled as part of a module or programme and students are taught by their Personal Tutors (Basset et al, 2014, Stevenson, 2009). The institution's approach to Personal Tutoring does not fit into the PDP and personal structured model proposed by Basset et al (2014), nor is it a hybrid (Watts, 2011) of Earwaker's three models. A Personal Tutor at Lawrance, as mentioned, supports the academic progress and personal development of the student; the well-being officer provides pastoral support. In terms of structure for timetabling tutorials, there is a range of practice at a local level; in some departments or schools there is evidence of a curriculum model, for example, for first year engineering students.

Therefore, in considering the findings above, the approach to Personal Tutoring has evolved beyond the suggested theoretical models in terms of the organisation of Personal Tutoring in institutions.

## **The Personal Tutor role**

The Personal Tutor role at the institution is about supporting academic progress; two overarching elements to the Personal Tutor role emerged from the findings. These were that the role is about academic and pastoral support. Indeed, the role is very much about being supportive. This supports the findings of Thomas (2012) and Hart (1996), who state that Personal Tutors tend to take on a pastoral role in addition to academic support. In addition, the findings demonstrate that the role is about supporting students with a range of personal issues as well as academic development. The following authors support this view, Stephen, O'Connell and Hall, (2008); Dobinson-Harrington, (2006); Sosabowski, Bratt, Herson, Olivier,

Sawers, Taylor, Zahoui and Denyer, (2003); Rickinson and Rutherford, (1995). Furthermore, the role can provide academic support and academic development; this is evident in the findings as supported by Mynott (2016), Small (2013), Thomas (2012), Stephen et al (2008), Dobinson-Harrington (2006), Bratt et al (2003) and Gidman (2001). As mentioned, the Personal Tutor role at the university is defined as to support academic progress and personal development throughout a student's university career (University of Lawrance, 2020). In fact, there is an expectation that the well-being officers take on the pastoral support for students. Despite this clear definition, the findings show that the role involves supporting students pastorally. In my research and the literature, overwhelmingly, the consensus for defining the Personal Tutor role is that it is about pastoral and academic support. Lindsay (2011) states that Personal Tutors find it difficult to balance the pastoral and academic strands of the role; there is no reporting of this in the findings of my research. In the pilot study the participants commented that they found the Personal Tutor role challenging.

In the findings, there was a sense that although the role officially is to provide academic support for students, that there is an expectation that the role provides an element of pastoral support (Mynott 2016; Small 2013; Thomas 2012; Stephen et al 2008; Dobinson-Harrington 2006; Bratt et al 2003 and Gidman 2001). Also, it is recognised that there are dedicated well-being officers to provide pastoral support for students. And that some tutors may feel that the Personal Tutor should be focused on academic support rather than pastoral (Bassett, Gallagher, and Price, 2014), because some staff may not feel comfortable when supporting students with pastoral issues (Watts, 2011; Stephen et al 2008; Luck 2010 and Stevenson, 2009). However, this was not a concern expressed in the findings.

In addition, the literature points to the idea that the Personal Tutor role is to support students with transition into university life (Small, 2013; Watts, 2011), in terms of students new to university and supporting the transition from home to university (Dobinson-Harrington, 2006; Wilcox et al, 2005). However, this was not an outcome of the findings; this perspective was not evident for the role of the Personal Tutor from the findings in my research.

The findings suggest that the Personal Tutor role is a signposting role to highlight further support and services, to refer the students to the relevant and necessary support services. This is a view supported by Ody and Carey, (2013), Thomas

(2012), Lambert and Johnston (2010) and Grant (2006). They also refer to the Personal Tutor being the first point of contact and the first point of support, the Personal Tutor often being the first person students turn to for advice and support, particularly if the students have an issue or a challenge. This is supported by the following authors, Alves (2009), Grant (2006), and Stanley and Manthorpe (2002).

Reported in the findings is that the Personal Tutor role is a way of monitoring the students, a kind of surveillance role in terms of attendance and participation. Similarly, Thomas et al (2017), Mynott (2016) and Thomas (2012) agree with this view, stating that Personal Tutors as part of their role chase tutees who do not attend tutorials or engage with the Personal Tutor process. Indeed, according to the findings, student engagement in Personal Tutoring can be a challenge. The literature also supports this view as Basset et al, (2014) comment that student engagement with Personal Tutors can be an issue. In fact, Thomas (2012) extends this understanding further and states the importance of developing the capacity of staff and students to engage is key to the tutor-tutee relationship succeeding. She goes on further to state that student engagement should be monitored and if students are not engaging, that there should be a follow-up action as a result. The findings support that the Personal Tutor role is a way of monitoring students. Likewise, Thomas et al (2017) found that Personal Tutors can be the preferred way of communication with students when there are concerns over attendance and participation.

It was also found that when Personal Tutors started the role of a Personal Tutor, they did not understand what the role was or what it was about or for, indicating a lack of clarity around the role as found in the literature (Stuart et al, 2019; QAA, 2013; Braine and Parnell, 2011; Owen, 2002). Also, the findings demonstrate that Personal Tutors in the beginning had incorrect perceptions of the role and that the role appeared ambiguous, in agreement with the following studies, Ghenghesh, 2018, Basset et al, 2014, Myers 2008 and Stephen et al. 2008. To add to these perceptions, I agree with the following authors, McFarlane, (2016), Briane and Parnell, (2011) and Owen (2002), that there is a lack of clarity surrounding the role of the Personal Tutor. Indeed, there is need for clarity on the role; this is important to enable tutors to understand and do the role well; this is echoed in the findings as confirmed by Huyton (2013), Watts (2011), Gardner and Lane (2010) and Gidman (2001).

In considering the varied views of the Personal Tutor role, this has influenced my suggestion of ensuring that HE institutions have a clear role descriptor for the Personal Tutor role as well as defining expectations to Personal Tutors as part of a model for how HE institutions could better support Personal Tutors.

## **The Impact of Personal Tutoring**

In exploring the impact of Personal Tutoring in the findings, the impact of Personal Tutoring from the point of view of the student and the Personal Tutor is discussed. Personal Tutors in the pilot study found that the online weekly group tutorials helped them to feel part of a community. In addition, they felt that the tutorials helped prevent small problems getting bigger and also improved communication between tutor and tutees by removing barrier and improving dialogue. For the students, the findings highlight that the impact of tutoring is about providing reassurance, clarification, guidance and developing confidence; it impacts their learning (Alves, 2019). In addition, Personal Tutoring can make a difference to the student's university experience and have an impact on student retention. This supports and adds to the views of Smith (2008), who states that Personal Tutoring has the potential to significantly influence the life of a tutee. The student retention aspect of the impact of the Personal Tutor role is highlighted as an important factor and benefit of Personal Tutoring and supports the findings from a range of authors: Webb, Wyness and Cotton (2017), Fitzgerald, 2014; Thomas, 2012; Braine and Parnell, 2011; Laycock, 2009; Bowden, 2008; Stephen et al, 2008; Wilcox, Winn and Fyvie-Gauld, 2005; Owen, 2002). As a result of the findings, I believe this viewpoint is important and concur with Bowden (2008), who identified that Personal Tutors are a significant factor in students staying at university, and support Laycock, (2009) who agrees categorically, stating that there is a positive link between Personal Tutoring and student retention. This link is also suggested by Fitzgerald (2014) and Braine and Parnell (2011). However, the findings also contradict this view as there is a viewpoint that the impact of Personal Tutoring on student retention is not significant and difficult to quantify. Therefore, the impact of Personal Tutoring is an area of focus that will be included in development and training sessions as suggested in planning a model for how HE institutions should better support Personal Tutors.

## **Personal Tutors' Workload**

There were opposing views in the findings in terms of Personal Tutors' workload and having the time to support students and the time it takes to do the Personal Tutor role. The findings indicate that this relates to the number of tutees tutors have, as well as the needs of their tutees. Additionally, it is reported that Personal Tutors do have enough time to do the role and support students, as stated by Barlow and Antoniou (2007). This contradicts the findings of others in the literature. There were changes to expectations for Personal Tutoring in 2020 due to the pandemic, and tutors were asked to do more in terms of weekly online group tutorials, which increased their workload. The second interviews took place as these new expectations were introduced, which could be why there were these responses.

Some of the responses in the findings state that Personal Tutors do not have enough time to do the role. Overwhelmingly, this supports the literature; there is no evidence in studies which states that Personal Tutors feel that they have enough time to do the role and support their students. In support, Chan (2016) and Ehrich, Hansford and Tennet (2004) highlighted in studies that tutors may have limited opportunities to support and build relationships. Also, Barlow and Antonio (2007) and Watts (2011) state that Personal Tutors may feel that they have a lack of time allowed for the role and feel overloaded with work. As mentioned earlier, the needs of tutees are highlighted in the findings as having an impact on the workload of Personal Tutors; it is recognised in the literature that the diverse needs of students do indeed influence the time Personal Tutors have to support students (Chan, 2016; Watts, 2011). In fact, Personal Tutors may feel overwhelmed with the demands of the students, in terms of the time needed to support and the difficulties and challenges which students face (Braine and Parnell, 2011; Stephen et al, 2008 and Earwaker, 1992). Furthermore, the findings support Riddell and Bates (2010), who found similar views as Personal Tutors in their study felt that there was not enough time to address students' support needs and issues due to an increase in students with complex needs. Ehrich et al (2004) agreed with this point. To add to this, Personal Tutors are not allocated time to do the role (Grey and Lochtie, 2016). In considering Personal Tutors' workload, I have made recommendations in my model for how institutions could better support Personal Tutors.

## Subordinate Theme: Building Relationships

Demonstrated in the findings is the importance of the tutor-tutee relationship and that this relationship is a positive aspect of the role for Personal Tutors, as supported by Riddell and Bates (2010) and Cokley (2000). The UKAT (2019a) definition of Personal Tutoring certainly supports this view of the importance of the tutor-tutee relationship; they state:

‘A **purposeful personal relationship** with their advisor/tutor enables students to become autonomous, confident learners and engaged members of society. This ongoing and **collaborative relationship** connects students deeply to their institution, supporting them through their course and beyond.’

Indeed, the findings demonstrate that the relationship is about making connections with students in a way that Personal Tutors would not usually do in teaching; furthermore, that the relationship is reciprocal and is about tutors getting to know their tutees. Attwood (2009) believes this relationship between tutor and tutees is incredibly important. To add to this, the relationship is a positive outcome of tutoring, as supported by Gardner and Lane (2010), who found that it is important for Personal Tutors to create a positive and caring relationship. The impact of this positive relationship is clear in the findings as it is linked to being supportive and student retention. Likewise, and in agreement with Thomas (2012), the students who had a positive relationship with staff and a better understanding of the university processes were less likely to think about leaving. These positive relationships are formed, as the findings show that most of the Personal Tutors do regularly teach their tutees. In support of this, Thomas (2018) recognises the importance of the tutor and tutee getting to know each other as it helps to encourage belonging and helps students feel valued. Indeed, Sosabowski et al (2003) and Owen (2002) state that students should be allocated Personal Tutors that teach them for a substantial amount each year to enable the tutor and tutee to get to know each other.

There is a sense of the developing relationship between tutor and tutee in the findings, and that the relationship builds over time and becomes a trusting relationship, a personal relationship as well as a professional relationship. To add to this, the importance of a supportive relationship is also evident and the fact that through this relationship a tutee will grow in confidence. Considering this, Riddell and Bates (2010) found similar results. They recognise the importance of



developing relationships as a Personal Tutor; they found that Personal Tutors saw themselves as lynchpins and lifelines for students, and key to them developing confidence and self-efficacy. Throughout the findings, there is a reporting of the relationship being about encouragement; in support Darling (1984) and Stephenson (1984) concur with the findings of my research as they state the importance of Personal Tutor and tutees having a trusting and encouraging relationship. Not found in the findings, but in the literature, the benefits of a positive relationship are explored further and have been found to increase self-concept and motivation (Cokley, 2000), as well as fostering independent learning and realising potential (Morey and Robbins, 2011).

The benefits of the relationship between tutor and tutee are discussed above. There are challenges to this relationship that I have experienced as a Personal Tutor and I am aware of colleagues that have had challenges; this is something not evident in the findings. Indeed, Holmes, Rupen, Ross and Shapera (1999) advocate caution and recommend not allowing a relationship to become too close due to the unequal power distribution between tutor and tutee. They suggest tutors need to be careful of being perceived of as a friend and avoid being too informal, as well as to be mindful of the boundaries in the relationship. In terms of boundaries, these will be explored in the professional development and training section below. Developing this relationship should be part of the development and training that institutions should offer to better support Personal Tutors. This will be included in my suggested model.

## **Subordinate Theme: Information Required for the Personal Tutor Role**

In terms of information and knowledge required for the Personal Tutor role, a range of frustrations are evident in the findings; these frustrations are experienced by both inexperienced Personal Tutors and experienced Personal Tutors, but this is less so. There is a reliance on senior and more experienced colleagues and their knowledge to support staff who are new to the role of Personal Tutor, as confirmed by McFarlane (2016), Race (2010) and Ridley (2006). Furthermore, as staff become more senior and more experienced, new and inexperienced Personal Tutors turn to them for support. In addition, Personal Tutors found that at times they lacked the necessary knowledge to support students and were unsure of the role of student services, as highlighted in the literature (McFarlane, 2016; Watts,

2011; Stephen et al, 2008; Smith, 2008). My research states the importance of Personal Tutors understanding the role of the support services, as supported by Ghenghesh (2018). Indeed, in agreement with Grant (2006), for Personal Tutors to do the role well they need to know about the student services that are available. In agreement Skordoulis and Naqavi (2010) found that Academic Advisors specified a need for support in advising on issues of institution regulations and systems.

Demonstrated in the findings is the challenge in accessing information for the Personal Tutor role via the university's website; it is difficult for participants to search and find what they are looking for. Often an internet search engine is used rather than the university's website; in fact, it is evident that at times the university website is avoided. Participants suggested a one-stop resource with limited mouse clicks to access information and knowledge required to support them in the Personal Tutor role; resources to support Personal Tutors are important, as Walker and Raby found (2019). The findings point to that fact that Personal Tutors are not expected to know everything to support them in the Personal Tutor role; however, they do need to recognise when they need support and to ask for help, which I agree with. Nevertheless, as supported by Ody and Carey (2013), there is a certain level of knowledge and understanding required to be able to signpost students to student services. As a result of these findings, in my suggested model for HE institutions to support Personal Tutors, I have included an information strand which is about the relevant information being available and accessible to Personal Tutors.

In summary, for the superordinate theme, the participants have experience of a range of approaches to Personal Tutoring based loosely around the curriculum model (Earwaker, 1992), but there is evidence of an approach or model that is not in the literature. There is a consensus of the understanding of the Personal Tutor role for participants in terms of being focused on academic and pastoral support. The role of the Personal Tutor was not clearly defined when participants initially started the role. Additionally, the importance of building relationships between the tutor and tutee is evident, as is the impact of this relationship for both parties. Finally, the findings point to the challenges that the participants faced in terms of accessing and finding out the information and knowledge they required and needed to undertake the Personal Tutor role.

## **Superordinate Theme: Professional Development and Training**

I will discuss the findings related to the superordinate theme of professional development and training in terms of the subordinate themes of induction for the Personal Tutor role and continuous development for the role of the Personal Tutor.

### **Subordinate Theme: Induction for the Personal Tutor Role**

There is an expectation that as a new academic staff member, staff take on the role of the Personal Tutor as part of the academic role. Mynott (2016) agrees with this view as they state that there is an assumption that almost all academic staff will be asked to take on the role of being a Personal Tutor. However, they do refer to being asked to do the role, whereas the findings do not suggest this. Generally academic staff are not expected to have expert advising/tutoring skills and they receive little or no guidance to support their professional development needs to perform the role. (Skordoulis and Naqavi, 2010). Additionally, there is also the thought that anyone who is a lecturer can be a Personal Tutor without any training, that it will 'come naturally' (Gubby and McNab, 2013; Owen, 2002). Indeed, the findings do concur with this view; however there is evidence in the findings that development and training is needed for the role of the Personal Tutor and that there is a need to distinguish between the different needs of new Personal Tutors and those of experienced Personal Tutors. This is also evidence in the literature, a view supported by Stuart et al (2019), Walker and Raby (2019), University of Warwick (2017), McFarlane (2016), Chan (2016), Small (2013), Huyton (2011), KMPG (2010) and Ridley (2006). New Personal Tutors benefit from having either a senior colleague or a mentor to support them in their role and this is supported in the literature (McFarlane, 2016; Ridley, 2006, Race, 2010). Small (2013) agrees, stating that new tutors do need support as they do not have the experience of experienced tutors; my findings agree with this as they state that seeking guidance and support from more experienced colleagues happens when staff are new to the role of Personal Tutor.

Moreover, there is evidence in the findings that new Personal Tutors starting the role do not know what to do or how Personal Tutoring works at the institution. In addition, the literature talks about new tutors feeling guilty (Barlow and Antoniou,

2007) about not giving students necessary support and goes on further to state that in developing tutors' confidence and competence in Personal Tutoring, the tutors' lack of supervision, support and training when dealing with intense personal issues is a challenge (Watts, 2011). Similar views are found with an explicit focus on a challenge being dealing with students' emotional issues and the lack of confidence that new Personal Tutors feel. Highlighting the need for EDI development and training. Indeed, it is evident according to the findings that new Personal Tutors are less confident about the role of the Personal Tutor, as found by Grant (2006). It is reported that new Personal Tutors felt inadequately trained, as agreed by Lindsay (2011) and Ghenghesh (2018), who commented that Personal Tutors may not have the knowledge or skills to support students and therefore need development and training. To add to this, highlighted in the findings, is the view that training would have been helpful and that new Personal Tutors felt that they had not received sufficient support. Furthermore, there is evidence of Personal Tutors not having any formal training or induction for the Personal Tutor role when they started, as suggested in the literature (University of Warwick, 2017; McFarlane, 2016; Watts 2011; Huyton 2009; Earwaker, 1992), and that they learned as they went along. The findings show that new Personal Tutors may not have had an opportunity to observe a colleague tutoring or to learn from peers and that they are thrown in at the deep end, did not feel ready for the Personal Tutor role, and that it will come naturally. This view is supported by Gubby and McNab (2013), Huyton (2011) and Owen (2002). The role for experienced Personal Tutors can be daunting and could be an overwhelming expectation for new Tutors (Skordoulis and Naqavi, 2010).

In the findings, there is evidence of a lack of training, supervision and support for Personal Tutoring, as supported in previous studies (Stuart, Wilcocks and Browning, 2019, McIntosh and Grey, 2017, McFarlane, 2016, Watts, 2011, Lindsay, 2011 KPMG, 2010 and Owen, 2002). It is clear from the findings that development and training is needed for new Personal Tutors and, in agreement, Thomas (2012) states that it is important to develop the capacity of staff for the role of Personal Tutoring; this is something I agree with and have experienced. In further support of development and training, Race (2010) found that many tutors learn through experience and talking to colleagues, and he commented that the lack of training for the role of Personal Tutor is a concern. However, there is evidence that more recently senior colleagues have begun to offer training and

support for Personal Tutors. Considering the discussion around development and training for new Personal Tutors I have included the need for development and training in the recommendations for a model for how HE institutions could better support Personal Tutors.

## **Subordinate Theme: Continuous Development for the Role of Personal Tutor**

There are differences in the findings as to whether Personal Tutors need continuous development and training, and this was around the thought that experienced Personal Tutors might not need development and training. Some of the participants felt that development and training is needed for experienced Personal Tutors, whereas other participants stated that experienced Personal Tutors learn as they go along, that development and training is not needed, and enough support is received. This is a strong thread in the literature, as identified by the following authors, McGill et al (2020a), Stuart et al (2019), Walker and Raby (2019), Thomas et al (2017), University of Warwick (2017), McIntosh and Grey (2017), Chan (2016), McFarlane (2016), NUS (2015), QAA (2013), Thomas (2012), KPMG (2010) and Clegg et al (2000). In agreement the pilot study concluded that Personal Tutors found that there was a lack of support for the role in terms of development and training. There were similar findings in the evaluation of online weekly group tutorials in which tutors felt there was a need for development for tutors. Indeed, Owen (2002) had similar results in their study as some experienced Personal Tutors felt that training was surplus to requirements; they go further to say that some tutors felt that training was not needed because the skills and attributes needed for Personal Tutoring came naturally to those that choose to lecture. Although in a US context, Selke and Wong (1993) state that Advisors often incorrectly believe that they can learn to do the role through experience only. Conversely, the findings suggest the need for an annual refresher, or an update development session and that the development and training could be online to provide easier access for Personal Tutors. Alongside this suggestion is that development or training sessions could have a specific focus. In support of this, McFarlane (2016) found that experienced Personal Tutors felt that an annual fresher or update might be useful in terms of development and training for the role. A recommendation from her study is for Personal Tutors to have some form of continuous updating, something annual. Furthermore, an audit

on the use of Personal Tutors conducted by KPMG (2010), suggested that guidance and training for Personal Tutors on the role should be formalised. In support of this, McGill et al (2020a) state that Personal Tutors need continuous training to remain current and knowledgeable about good practice in Personal Tutoring. The findings agree with this and in fact state that development and training should be mandatory; this is not a viewpoint found in the literature.

## **Development and Training Suggestions**

In terms of what development and training should focus on and what support Personal Tutors need to do the role, the findings suggest that managing boundaries and setting expectations is an area of concern and indicate that this would be a useful focus for development and training. The following authors are in support of this, University of Warwick (2017), McFarlane (2016), Huyton (2013), Thomas (2012), Lindsay (2011), Watts (2011), Gardner and Lane (2010), Luck (2010), Ridley (2006), Gidman (2001) and Holmes et al (1999). However, what is also evident is that some of the experienced Personal Tutors set clear expectations and manage boundaries well and that they are clear from the beginning of the tutor-tutee relationship, and they feel that this is important. Despite this, I support this view for potential development and training. Ridley (2016) talks specifically about new Personal Tutors finding it difficult to define boundaries between being accessible and being too available, possibly resulting in feeling overwhelmed; this is not explicit in the findings of my research. In support, Lindsay (2011), Watts (2011) and Gardner and Lane (2010) also recognise the importance of Personal Tutors establishing appropriate boundaries and state that in turn this helps create a positive and caring relationship. Further support for this topic is demonstrated by Lindsay (2011), who states in their study that Personal Tutors had a lack of knowledge in how to establish ground rules and boundaries to clarify the role of the Personal Tutor. Ghenghesh (2018) concurs, suggesting that Personal Tutors may lack the knowledge needed to support students.

On the other hand, in the findings, there is evidence to suggest that some Personal Tutors do not feel that they must manage boundaries and set expectations and that it is part of the tutor-tutee relationship and that it just happens and comes naturally; this is not supported by the literature. Due to the pandemic, Personal Tutoring has been taking place online and the findings suggest that this has caused challenges in boundaries and expectations in terms

of whether tutees should have their camera on and off, as well as where the student is when the tutorial takes place, for example, in the bedroom, and how they are dressed. Indeed, I recognise that staff development can be identified as a strategy to support tutors in supporting students (Thomas et al, 2017).

A consensus in the findings for development for Personal Tutors is creating a sense of belonging and community, as shown in the literature (McFarlane, 2016; Small, 2013; Watts, 2011; Dobinson-Harrington, 2006; Thomas, 2006), with a particular focus on how to do this in an online tutoring environment. Alongside this, the challenges are also highlighted; these include that tutees may feel a sense of belonging to the school or department they are in but not to the institution. I agree with Thomas (2012), who states that interactions with students should aim to nurture a culture of belonging through supportive and meaningful interactions. In addition, there is a suggestion that for students with diverse needs or backgrounds, it may be difficult for them to feel that sense of belonging and community.

Thomas (2012) states that interactions with students should aim to nurture a culture of belonging through supportive and meaningful interactions. Another aspect or topic for a development and training focus in the findings is EDI, in terms of how Personal Tutors support students with diverse need and backgrounds, with well-being and mental health being areas mentioned. In acknowledgement with McFarlane (2016), Watts (2011) and Smith (2008), some Personal Tutors lack confidence in supporting students, for example, students with diverse backgrounds, the concept of supporting the diverse needs of students being a challenge for Personal Tutors, as supported by Lindsay, (2011). There is strong support in the findings for support for tutors in this area, with a reference to this being a mandatory training session for Personal Tutors.

## **Subordinate Themes: Skills and Values Required for the Role of Personal Tutor**

The skills and values required for the role of Personal Tutor is an area of potential development and training as Personal Tutors may lack the skills to support students, as Ghenghesh (2018) agrees. The findings suggest a range of skills and values required for the role of Personal Tutor; a strong theme is that tutoring is about 'being human', as supported by McIntosh and Grey (2017). In the Online

Group Tutorials report a finding and recommendation was that the development of skills for the Personal Tutor role was a need alongside supporting tutors to develop their confidence. An important skill highlighted in the findings is that Personal Tutors need to be willing to go and ask for help. McIntosh and Grey (2017) concur with this and state that it is important to get support from colleagues and seek assistance. Furthermore, some of the skills and values suggested in the findings are evident in the literature, specifically: compassionate, non-judgemental, approachable, valuing students as individuals and listening (Lochtie, et al, 2018). Other skills and values in the findings include, being honest, sensitive, communicative, empathetic, open and respectful. Despite not all these attributes being explicitly mentioned in the literature, some relate to the following terms identified in the research: the 'equal partner, not superior' approach and compassion, as confirmed by Lochtie et al (2018). In addition, the importance of Personal Tutors having good interpersonal skills and enjoying interacting with people is supported by McGill et al (2020a); this is implicit in the findings. Evident throughout the findings, this discussion chapter, in the literature and highlighted by the Personal Tutors is the need to possess patience, empathy and effective communication skills (McIntosh and Cross, 2017; Lindsay, 2011; Bell and Treleaven, 2011). Quinn (1995) corroborates this; they say that Personal Tutors should embrace Rogers' (1983) qualities of genuineness, trust, acceptance and empathetic understanding, further supporting the findings. McGill et al (2020a) found in their study that a strong Personal Tutor-tutee relationship involves the tutor communicating in a way that appreciates the diversity of student experiences and backgrounds. Therefore, Personal Tutors can establish a positive and caring relationship by being approachable and accessible (Braine and Parnell, 2011). This is an aspect that can be explored in a development and training session as part of my model on how institutions could better support Personal Tutors.

In conclusion, there is a need for an induction in terms of development and training for staff who are new to the Personal Tutor role, and it is important to develop the capacity of staff for the role (Thomas, 2012). There are differing views towards the need for continuous development and training for experienced Personal Tutors in the findings, whereas the literature supports the need for continuous professional development (McGill et al, 2020a; McFarlane, 2016). In the findings, there are thoughts and suggestions around possible content for development and training sessions, for example, defining boundaries, how to create a sense of belonging,



the importance of the tutee-tutor relationship, working with and supporting the diverse needs of students as well as consideration of the skills and values required for the Personal Tutor role. These thoughts and suggestions are shared as recommendations for practice.

## **Superordinate Theme: Reward and Recognition for the Role of Personal Tutor**

In terms of reward and recognition for the Personal Tutor role, the findings indicate that there is no reward or recognition at an institutional level and state that reward for the role is felt at a personal level. In fact, the findings overwhelmingly highlight that the reward for the role is a personal one and that it is about the relationship between tutor and tutee and the positive impact that Personal Tutors have on their tutees. Personal Tutoring can be a rewarding and valuable part of the academic role, as recognised by Ridley (2006), and it should be recognised in staff rewards and recognition schemes according to the NUS (2015). To add to this, the findings point to there being no reward for the Personal Tutor role professionally, and that Personal Tutors do not feel valued in the role, with which Woods (2020) agrees. This view of not feeling rewarded for the role as well as feeling unrecognised for the Personal Tutor role is echoed in the studies conducted by the University of Warwick (2017), Grey and Lochtie (2016) and Lindsay (2011). Furthermore, Huyton (2011) extends this and agrees with the findings, as does Lindsay as they both found that Personal Tutors felt overlooked in terms of reward and recognition.

The findings support the literature in suggesting that there is a need for Personal Tutoring to be valued and for Personal Tutors to be recognised and rewarded for the role (Stuart et al, 2019; NUS, 2015; Morey and Robbins, 2011; Thomas, 2012), with recommendations for the role to be included in promotion criteria (University of Warwick, 2017; Grey and Lochtie, 2016; Skordoulis and Naqavi, 2010). In the findings, there are suggestions as to how the Personal Tutor role could be rewarded and recognised; the main areas being that the Personal Tutor role should be part of the promotion criteria, workload allocation planning and as part of the annual appraisal process, and in doing this acknowledge accountability for the role. However, in the findings there are thoughts that oppose some of these recommendations; underlying this evidence is a concern about how Personal Tutoring can be performance measured to be part of promotion criteria and the annual appraisal process, with a recognition that Personal Tutoring is conducted

differently in different schools and departments. This is not evidenced in the literature.

The findings overwhelmingly support the suggestion of Personal Tutoring being part of workload allocation and planning, as confirmed in the literature (University of Warwick, 2017; Mynott, 2016; Huyton, 2011; Morey and Robbins, 2011; Grey and Lochtie, 2006). Often workload for the role is allocated in hours as part of a workload model; the findings state the workload allocation should be based on the number of tutees Personal Tutors have. In support, the literature recognises the need for workload allocation but recognises that the hours tend not to reflect the time spent with the students (Thomas, 2012; Watts, 2011; Barlow and Antoniou, 2007) and that this can lead to tutors feeling guilty about not giving students the necessary support. This concern is not reported in the findings.

In terms of reward and recognition for the role of Personal Tutors, the findings point to the idea of there being an award for the role, possibly at a school or department level and at an institutional level. The literature demonstrates the need for reward and recognition for the Personal Tutor role but does not mention explicitly an award. However, there is a reward and recognition for the Personal Tutor role externally to the institution via the UKAT (2020) Professional Recognition Scheme; there is some awareness of the scheme in the findings and mixed views about taking part in the scheme. This is a new scheme introduced in 2019/20.

## **Summary**

In summarising, for staff to carry out the role of Personal Tutor, there needs to be an understanding of the role, yet there is a consensus amongst participants that the role of the Personal Tutor does not directly match the university's definition in terms of their own lived experience, or the models reviewed in the literature. In addition, the importance of the tutor-tutee relationship is highlighted as a strength for the role. Also, all participants talked about the challenges of accessing information and resources from the university to support them in the role of the Personal Tutor. In terms of development and training, the findings overwhelmingly support the need for development for staff who are new to the role of Personal Tutor; however, in contrast, there are mixed views for development and training for staff who are experienced Personal Tutors. The literature suggests that there is a need for development for experienced Personal Tutors; with my experience and

understanding I agree with this. Furthermore, a range of skills and values are shared by the participants in terms of what they feel Personal Tutors need. There is no doubt that the participants do not feel rewarded or recognised for the role of Personal Tutor by the institution; however, they do feel that the reward for the role comes from supporting their tutees and seeing the progress they have made. This supports the need for a model of how institutions could better support Personal Tutors, which is what I am recommending as an outcome of this research.

My research addresses the research questions demonstrated using a research design and analytical method I chose to enable me to answer the research questions and arrive at the findings and discussion. As the researcher, I do believe that I have gained a better and more in-depth understanding and new knowledge of staff perspectives of Personal Tutoring and how the university supports Personal Tutoring. There is a shortage of research into Personal Tutoring, and it is recognised that tutoring has the potential in enhancing student engagement and retention (Webb et al, 2017). Furthermore, Thomas (2018) talks about the field of Personal Tutoring in HE being something of an academic research desert. Through this new understanding and new knowledge, I will be making recommendations that make an original contribution to the field of Personal Tutoring in terms of both practice and theory, which will result in enhancing both the staff and student experience of Personal Tutoring.

# Chapter 5 Conclusions and Recommendations

## Introduction

My research makes an original contribution to the theory, knowledge, and practice of Personal Tutoring, it set out to gain an understanding of staff perceptions of Personal Tutoring and the importance of Personal Tutoring in HE to the student experience, which is evident throughout the literature. My research has identified a gap in terms of a model for how staff could be supported and prepared to do the role of a Personal Tutor, hence the recommendation of a model as to how HE institutions could better support Personal Tutors. The research sought to answer the following research questions and gives Personal Tutors a voice.

- What are tutors' perspectives of the role of the Personal Tutor?
- How does an HE institution support the development of Personal Tutors?
- How does an HE institution reward and recognise the role of the Personal Tutor?
- What model of Personal Tutoring could HE institutions use to better support Personal Tutors?

This chapter will explore the findings to the research questions, the limitations of the study, the recommendations for practice, the recommendations for future research, dissemination of the research and finally the conclusion. This study was conducted due to the need for research into Personal Tutoring and I hope that my research moves towards addressing a gap. It is recognised that, despite the importance of Personal Tutoring, it is often overlooked within universities (Ghenghesh 2018; Thomas, 2018; Webb, Wyness and Cotton, 2017; Raman, 2016; Ryan and Tilbury, 2013). Furthermore, in terms of the organisation of Personal Tutoring and considering the models of Personal Tutoring in the engineering department, there is evidence of a curriculum model for the first year undergraduate students, as defined by Earwaker (1992), at my institution, alongside other models of Personal Tutoring that are not defined in the literature. Also evident in my research is the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of the organisation of Personal Tutoring and in carrying out the interviews to gather the data and perceptions of the participants.

My research has added to the theory, knowledge and the practice of Personal Tutoring as it gives a greater understanding of staff perceptions of tutoring and

how staff should be supported better to carry out the role of the Personal Tutor. It adds to the literature as it gives an in-depth look at the experiences of tutors and explores how Personal Tutors could be prepared for the role of the Personal Tutor as well as being rewarded and recognised for the role. Therefore, my contribution offers a potential model of how institutions could better support Personal Tutors to carry out the Personal Tutor role. The findings are relevant to my immediate context but also the HE sector.

## **Synthesis of the Findings to the Research Questions**

Adopting a case study and phenomenological approach to my research has enabled me to collect and understand the data in order to allow me to answer the research questions. In using this approach and methods, I have been able to understand and learn from the participants' perspectives. I designed the research to answer the research questions and to find out Personal Tutors' lived experiences of Personal Tutoring. Therefore, this section will synthesise the findings to address the research questions and highlight the key concepts from my research and how they led to the emergence of my two models.

## **What are Tutors' Perspectives of the Role of the Personal Tutor?**

In this research I have argued that there is a lack of clarity around the role of the Personal Tutor, what it entails and how it is carried out. Staff perspectives of Personal Tutoring have similarities and differences; however, there is acknowledgement that the Personal Tutor role has an academic and pastoral element to it. This is interesting considering that the role of the Personal Tutor at the institution focuses on academic support (University of Lawrance, 2020). The Personal Tutors in this research recognised that the role at their institution is focused on academic support; however they had expectations that there is a pastoral element to the role as well. Additionally, they were aware that the well-being officers are in post to provide pastoral support for the students.

A common viewpoint in my research is that a responsibility of the role is to signpost students to the relevant student services and other support networks (Ody and Carey, 2013; Thomas 2012; Lambert and Johnston, 2010; Grant, 2006), and that the Personal Tutor is the first point of contact for the student in terms of support. Alongside this is that the role can be a way of monitoring attendance and

participation. However, student engagement is highlighted as a challenge. My research demonstrates from the staff perspectives that when the participants were new Personal Tutors and started the role of the Personal Tutor, they had a lack of understanding of the Personal Tutor role.

This research shows the impact of Personal Tutoring on the student and the Personal Tutor; the key to this is the tutor-tutee relationship, which is an important and positive aspect of the Personal Tutor role. A Personal Tutor can make a real difference to the student and their university experience in terms of student retention as well as providing reassurance, clarification, guidance and developing the confidence of tutees. Personal Tutoring is of value to students in terms of enhancing their university experience and supporting them to develop. Additionally, the impact on the Personal Tutor is very much on a personal level and this is discussed further in the next section in relation to reward and recognition.

Interestingly, there are different perceptions about the workload of Personal Tutoring, despite that fact that a key challenge in the literature (Chan, 2016; Watts, 2011; Antonio, 2007; Ehrich et al, 2004) is that tutors do not have enough time to do the role at times and can feel overloaded by the role. However, the workload of Personal Tutoring appears to be related to the number of tutees that tutors support and the diverse needs of tutees. Nonetheless, it can be seen in the next section that in reference to reward and recognition, the participants would like Personal Tutoring to feature in the workload allocation model.

A key challenge and frustration from the point of view of the participants is the access to information and resources needed to support the Personal Tutor role; this is as a new Personal Tutor and as an experienced Personal Tutor. The experienced Personal Tutors become a key resource for information and knowledge and the one Personal Tutors turn to first for advice and guidance; this includes staff new to Personal Tutoring as well as experienced Personal Tutors. The institution's website is seen as a challenge to access information and Personal Tutors use an internet search engine to seek the information they require.

There is evidence of a pastoral model (Earwaker, 1992) from the point of view of the participants as well as a curriculum model (Earwaker, 1992) for first year students, as identified in the review of literature. I acknowledge that data on actual

practices across UK HE institutions was not accessed, as this was beyond the scope of my research questions. I reviewed the existing models of Personal Tutoring and considered how they related to my own institution. Despite the participants' perceptions of the role of the Personal Tutor being about pastoral support, the institution has a clear definition that it focuses on academic support (University of Lawrence, 2020). The institutional model does not fit with any theoretical models, as evident in table 2 on page 26. I recognise that the approach to Personal Tutoring in HE institutions has evolved. Lochtie et al (2018) make the point that there has been little research into Personal Tutoring in the UK since Earwaker's (1992) work.

## **How does an HE Institution Support the Development of Personal Tutors?**

There are inconsistencies in staff development and training to support Personal Tutors and some suggestions of it being mandatory. In my research, in terms of an HE institution supporting Personal Tutors, as mentioned above, support for the role comes from colleagues and, in particular, colleagues who are experienced in Personal Tutoring. Indeed, there appears to be a lack of support for new Personal Tutors, including the absence of any development and training. Additionally, there is a sense of learning on the job and new Personal Tutors learning as they experience the Personal Tutor role. In terms of ongoing support for the Personal Tutor role, this seems to be in the form of seeking support from colleagues, as previously mentioned, in a more informal capacity; there is reported no formal support in terms of development and training. However, senior colleagues in the engineering department have begun to offer more formal methods of support for the Personal Tutor role, including development and training. Furthermore, there is a consensus of a need for development and training and what this might involve which will be discussed in the recommendations for practice section below.

## **How does an HE Institution Reward and Recognise the Role of the Personal Tutor?**

In considering reward and recognition for the Personal Tutor, the participants felt that there is no support for the role in terms of reward and recognition from the institution. However, as mentioned earlier, the participants do feel rewarded for the Personal Tutor role on a personal level in terms of the tutor-tutee relationship. Additionally, suggestions were made as to how an HE institution could support Personal Tutors in terms of reward and recognition, and they will be discussed in the recommendations for practice section.

## **What Model of Personal Tutoring could HE Institutions use to Better Support Personal Tutors?**

The final research question emerged during the process of reviewing the literature and analysing the data. In considering my findings, discussion and response to the previous research questions, I am proposing and recommending a model of how HE institutions could better support Personal Tutors. My model has three strands, and it is discussed in more detail in the recommendations for practice section. The first strand is 'information', based on my research and findings that Personal Tutors find it a challenge to access the information and knowledge they require to do the Personal Tutor role and to do it well. The second strand is 'development', which is a result of this research demonstrating that there is a need for development and training for new Personal Tutors as well as experienced Personal Tutors. The third strand is 'reward and recognition' and relates to my findings that support the need for reward and recognition for the Personal Tutor role. My model suggests a whole institutional approach to better support Personal Tutors.

## **Limitations of the Study**

The study is a small-scale research project and therefore it is not intended to generalise the findings beyond the sample in question. Also, I recognise that in adopting the case study and phenomenological approach, a small sample was used and, due to the small numbers in the sample, the findings are not widely extensive, and generalisations cannot be made (Wisker, 2001). Indeed, they are based on the views of six people in the institution from one subject area: the sample has limitations due to the subjective nature in choosing the sample and therefore is not a good representative of the wider population (Walliman, 2006).



There could be gender bias in the findings as the sample is not diverse. The perceptions of the participants could be influenced by the diversity of their tutees.

Furthermore, in using this kind of sample, it rests on the subjectivity of the researcher's decision, and this is a potential bias and therefore a challenge to the validity of the research (Jupp, 2006). To add to this, Malim, Birch and Wadeley (1992) for this research approach state that generalisations are often not possible and that idiographic studies are potentially subjective, intuitive and impressionistic. Also, IPA does not attempt to find one single answer or truth; it is about paying attention to the words of the participants in order to gain a reasonable account of their perspectives (Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty and Hendry, 2011). However, I recognise that my research gives a voice to the participants and therefore their word choices are important. In recognising the interpretative nature of IPA, it is possible that in using the same data, another researcher may come to different conclusions in terms of emerging themes and superordinate and subordinate themes (Coolican, 2004).

For the interviews, open-ended questions were used; they do result in a great deal of information and this information may not be comparable or easily codable. The data are time consuming to process (Lavrakas, 2008) as the interviews were transcribed, then analysed using the six steps of IPA which resulted in repeated engagement with the data. Additionally, I recognise that in undertaking interviews, the data could be problematic as they are always situational and textual (Silverman, 1993). Also, as the interviews took place virtually, I appreciate that this is not the same as conducting face-to-face interviews; as the researcher, I and the participant did not occupy the same physical space and Cater (2011) makes the point that virtual interviews can result in missed opportunities for me as the researcher to respond to body language and emotional cues.

There are ethical issues with the study as, despite the participants being anonymous and ensuring confidentiality, this is a challenge as others will see this research and participants' responses (Smith et al, 2009). As mentioned in chapter four, there are challenges in being an insider researcher (Drake, 2010) and, as the researcher, I have my own perceptions and interpretations I needed to be aware of.

## **Recommendations for Practice**

In this section, I will share recommendations for professional practice in terms of institutional and system practice. These recommendations are a result of my research; indeed this is what I have found, and this is my contribution to the theory, knowledge and practice of education. Additionally, I am proposing a model as to how HE institutions could better support Personal Tutors and Personal Tutoring.

### **Institutional Practice**

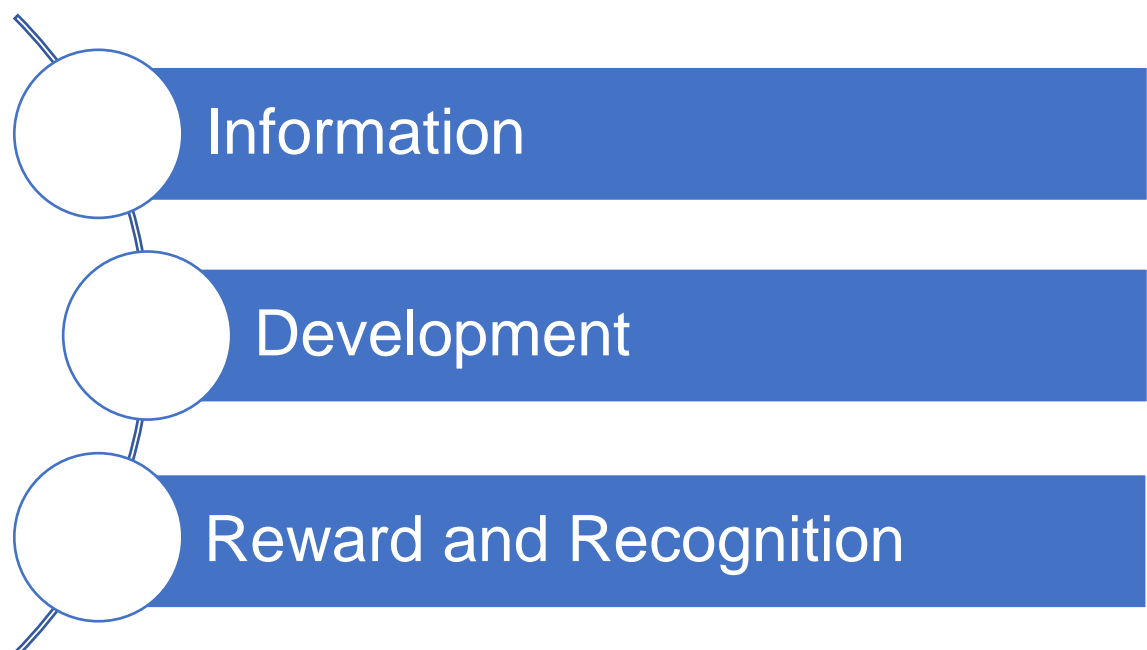
In considering development and training, my research shows there needs to be a range of development and training available for Personal Tutors and thought needs to be given to the needs of new Personal Tutors and experienced Personal Tutors. My recommendations from this research are that new Personal Tutors should have an induction which includes development and training and a mentor who is experienced in Personal Tutoring, with opportunities for the new Personal Tutor to observe their mentor when they are undertaking Personal Tutoring. Furthermore, the induction should include a description of the Personal Tutor role along with expectations and responsibilities of the role, communication skills and strategies, the impact of Personal Tutoring, developing relationships with tutees, as well as managing boundaries and strategies for creating a sense of belonging and community and EDI development and training.

In addition to development and training for new Personal Tutors, I believe as a result of my research that experienced Personal Tutors should have ongoing, continuous development and training for the Personal Tutor role to enhance their Personal Tutor practice. This could be in the form of an annual refresher or update development session as well as specific development and training sessions with a focus on EDI and supporting the diverse needs of students and the skills and values required for the role of the Personal Tutor with reminders about the impact of Personal Tutoring and the importance of the tutor-tutee relationship. Additionally, I suggest development and training sessions should be delivered centrally to bring Personal Tutors together from different area or disciplines to share ideas, practice and explore the challenges of the role. Moreover, it would be great if the development and training could be mandatory for Personal Tutors; however, I recognise that in some HE institutions this would be difficult.

Furthermore, the development and training could be a combination of online and face to face sessions as well as synchronous and asynchronous.

As a result of my analysis of data and findings, I am proposing a model for how HE institutions could support Personal Tutors; see Figure 6. The Personal Tutor is at the heart of the model and, in analysing the interviews and synthesising the findings to the research questions, three key themes have emerged which I call strands: information, development and reward and recognition; these are discussed in more detail in the next paragraph.

*Figure 6: Model for How an HE Institution Could Better Support Personal Tutors*



My research demonstrates that Personal Tutors are not always clear about the Personal Tutor role and that they do not always have access to or can find the information required to support them in undertaking the Personal Tutor role. Therefore, the information strand is about giving Personal Tutors the information they need to carry out the Personal Tutor role. This is as a new Personal Tutor, in terms of what information they need as induction for the role, for example, a role descriptor and a code of practice and policy for Personal Tutoring as a minimum to introduce them to the role. And for all Personal Tutors, they need to know how to access information via university systems as well as what support services are available for students. Accessing this information was a source of frustration for the participants.

As a result of my findings, I have created a development strand in my model, development and training according to my research is something that personal need and require to be able to carry out the Personal Tutor role. This strand is about the need for Personal Tutors to have development and training; this should include an induction for new Personal Tutors and ongoing continuous development for all Personal Tutors. This could be via face-to-face sessions, online: synchronous and asynchronous or a combination of those. In considering continuous development, there could be specific sessions that Personal Tutors request to meet their needs, for example, listening with confidence. It is also important to discuss the impact that a Personal Tutor can have on the student experience, such as student retention. Areas for development identified from my research are, how to manage boundaries and set expectations, creating a sense of belonging and community, EDI, supporting students with diverse needs and backgrounds, and discussing specific skills and values that are required for the Personal Tutor role.

The reward and recognition strand is about institutions valuing their Personal Tutors and rewarding them for the role and recognising their contributions, this strand is a result of my research finding out that there is no reward or recognition for Personal Tutors at an institutional level. In the next section 'System Practice' there is more detail as to what reward and recognition could look like in an institution. Institutions could show that they value their Personal Tutors and recognise the role by funding Personal Tutors to gain recognition via the UKAT Professional Recognition Scheme.

In suggesting this model based on my research, I would argue that it is vital to invest in supporting Personal Tutors via the three strands to motivate and make Personal Tutors feel valued. In doing this, it could potentially increase student satisfaction and retention, particularly considering the changing nature of HE.

## **System Practice**

With reference to system practice, information and resources are needed to support Personal Tutoring in an HE institution, and indeed to support Personal Tutors. It is clear from chapter three and four that the role of the Personal Tutor needs to be made explicit by the institution and openly shared with Personal Tutors as they take on the role of the Personal Tutor. In addition, roles and

responsibilities for the Personal Tutor role must be clear so that staff are aware of expectations of the role and, importantly, what is not included in the role.

Furthermore, there needs to be a one stop resource where Personal Tutors can go to, to find and access the information and resources they need rather than searching a university internet or intranet site. This could be on a VLE as a Personal Tutor hub or something similar; Personal Tutors are busy individuals and would appreciate a one click approach to finding what they need. Indeed, the resource could include a frequently asked questions section as well as links to relevant student support services in order to aid the Personal Tutor in signposting their students. The resource could have areas to support new Personal Tutors as well as experienced Personal Tutors; also the resource could house development and training materials and support for tutors.

The final recommendations from my research are that HE institutions need to have a system of reward and recognition in place for Personal Tutors; this would help to raise the profile and the importance of the Personal Tutor role. Therefore, I have four recommendations:

- The Personal Tutor role should be recognised as part of the institution's promotion criteria. However, how the Personal Tutor role is to be evaluated needs to be clear alongside relevant performance measures.
- The Personal Tutor role should be recognised as part of workload allocation and planning. This is likely to be based on the number of tutees a Personal Tutor has.
- The Personal Tutor role should be included in the annual personal development review appraisal process. As with the first point, how to evaluate and measure the role needs careful consideration.
- There should be an institutional award for the Personal Tutor role as part of the annual teaching and learning awards or equivalent.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

I believe there is a need for further research in Personal Tutoring with a focus on staff perspectives; much of the research in Personal Tutoring is focused on the student perspective and supporting students. It is important to note that at the UKAT annual conference in March 2021, twenty-four of the sessions on the schedule were focused on supporting students and the student experience,

whereas four of the sessions were focused on supporting staff in Personal Tutoring. To add to this, out of these four sessions, three were delivered by international staff and the fourth was delivered by myself and two colleagues from the UK.

In reflecting on my research, I have considered what I might have done differently. I would have liked to have delved more deeply into the participants' experiences of Personal Tutoring and interviewed them again, exploring the impact of the changes due to the pandemic. Also, it would have been useful to gain the participants' views and feedback on my proposed new model for Personal Tutoring as well as sharing the findings. In not doing this I recognise that my approach deviates from pure IPA. This was due to time pressures and the impact of an increase in workload due to the pandemic. This is a possibility for future research and as a next step.

Some of the literature findings are not addressed in my small sample and are areas worth exploring further, for example, the difficulties of balancing pastoral and academic support. Also, the literature talks about Personal Tutors not having sufficient time to do the role, whereas in my research this was not seen as an issue; this is worth following up. The benefits of a positive relationship between a Personal Tutor and tutee is an area for further consideration as this positive relationship, according to the literature, helps to increase self-concept and motivation, foster independent learning and realise potential (Morey and Robbins, 2011; Cokley, 2000). Also, the lack of clarity about the role in the literature points to Personal Tutors feeling insecure and unsafe, which may result in poor student experience. This aspect of Personal Tutoring could be researched further. In addition, it would be useful to investigate further the potential challenges of the Personal Tutor and tutee relationship; this could include exploring in more detail the difficulties of defining boundaries between being accessible and being too available. I found this as a new Personal Tutor and this is a point made in the literature but not reported by the participants. A viewpoint in the literature is that the Personal Tutor role is beneficial for supporting students with the transition from home to university (Small, 2013; Watts, 2011; Dobinson-Harrington, 2006); this was not an outcome in the findings and is an area that would be useful to look in to.

Also, in considering further research building on from this study, it would be interesting to conduct a similar study in different subject areas or disciplines, to enable further exploration of staff perspectives as well as considering a broader sample. It may be useful to gain the perspectives of senior colleagues who are responsible for Personal Tutoring at the university, to find out their insights and vision for Personal Tutoring. In addition, it may be beneficial to conduct similar research at a different HE institution and a post-1992 university to compare and contrast findings. In broadening the scope of the study, future research could be conducted on an international scale to compare the perceptions of international Personal Tutors.

A further area of research that would be interesting is related to EDI in terms of EDI challenges in the student body and EDI challenges in the tutor body. This could be exploring Personal Tutors from different demographics and investigating their perceptions of the role and also whether the diversity of the Personal Tutor impacts how they carry out the role. Also, the diversity of the students and how this might affect the tutor-tutee relationship.

Other areas of future research could include investigating the HE institutions who have changed the name of the Personal Tutor to academic advisor and finding out the rationale for the change. In keeping with looking at HE institutions, further research could be conducted in terms of exploring alternative models of Personal Tutoring. Also, the role of the senior tutor is an area for further research as this is a role that has emerged and grown in HE institutions recently.

In developing a one stop resource for Personal Tutors, as mentioned above, further research could be conducted into what this resource might look like, what the content should be and what the most suitable platform would be to house the resource; the university website or intranet pages may not be the best platform to use.

In light of the recommendations of my research in terms of reward and recognition, thought needs to be given to the criteria for promotion for Personal Tutors as well as the performance measures to be used; this is the case for annual appraisals as well. This could be an area for further research to consider and suggest relevant criteria.

Furthermore, it would be useful to implement the recommendations from my research and then explore the impact of these through staff perceptions, for example, doing a pilot induction programme for new Personal Tutors and running specific development and training sessions, such as supporting students with diverse needs. In addition, it might be useful to find out if there are other specific development sessions that Personal Tutors would like, such as supporting international students, basic communication skills and relational strategies, and even coaching skills for Personal Tutors. I am aware that some universities are using a coaching approach for Personal Tutoring.

Also, it may be beneficial to explore the perceptions of students to complement my research in terms of their perspectives of how they are supported by Personal Tutors and the impact of Personal Tutoring on them and their experience. It might be interesting to find out staff and student perspectives of effective Personal Tutoring.

## **Dissemination**

In sharing my research, I plan to disseminate and share my findings via a range of academic communities and Personal Tutor networks to showcase the unique contribution to the theory, knowledge and practice of education. To begin with, I will disseminate at my own institution starting with senior management, then sharing my research via the senior tutor forum as well as at the institution's annual learning and teaching conference. Also, there will be opportunities to share my research as part of a reading group and as a continuing professional development event as well as doing a MicroCPD video. Additionally, going beyond the institution I have a range of roles within UKAT, including the editor of their bimonthly newsletter. I plan to disseminate my research in the UKAT newsletter and to complement this, I can share highlights on the UKAT blog and present a UKAT webinar based around my research. Also, UKAT have an annual conference at which I can share my research. Furthermore, UKAT is allied to NACADA, the global community for academic advising; there are similar opportunities as UKAT for dissemination including a podcast titled 'Adventures in Advising'.

Furthermore, I have links with other universities and, in 2020, was invited to a London university to share my insights into Personal Tutoring. I will contact this network of universities to offer to disseminate and share my research and findings. To add to this, there is a Personal Tutoring jiscmail, which is an email list for the



UK Education and Research communities. I will put an email on this list and offer to share my research with interested parties.

In 2020, I co-wrote a paper with colleagues from America and the UAE, and this was published in a *Frontiers in Education* special edition journal titled 'Academic Advising and Tutoring for Student Success in Higher Education, International Perspectives'. In writing this paper collaboratively with international colleagues, I now have the international networks to disseminate my research.

In exploring UK peer reviewed publications, the following journals are possibilities for publishing and sharing my research as an article: *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, *Education Action Research*, *Active Learning in Higher Education* and *the Journal of Teaching and Learning*. These journals are UK based. As mentioned, additionally there are opportunities to publish outside of the UK and a good place to start is via NACADA, and to consider their online journal called '*Academic Advising Today*' as they seek out articles internationally to publish in the journal.

## Conclusions

My research aimed to gain an understanding of staff perceptions of Personal Tutoring and the study was conducted with a view to make a unique contribution to the theory, knowledge and practice of education and, in particular, Personal Tutoring, which will result in enhancing both the staff and student experience of Personal Tutoring. The research findings contribute to and advance knowledge of Personal Tutoring.

I wanted to give Personal Tutors a voice to share their experiences of the role, which can sometimes be seen as an area of 'institutionally invisible practice' (Huyton, 2013). Also, I hoped to gain a better understanding of how institutions can better support Personal Tutors in the future so that tutors feel they can do the role well and in turn make a difference to the student experience. I believe in considering the current HE context, it is even more important than ever that institutions consider how to structure Personal Tutoring and how to support Personal Tutors in their role. A diverse population of students requires further and more structured support (McIntosh and Cross, 2017).

As mentioned in the introduction, there is a lack of research into Personal Tutoring (Frontiers, 2021; Ghenghesh, 2018; Thomas, 2018; Webb et al, 2017), and my research contributes and adds to the literature and to the academic research desert for the field of Personal Tutoring, as described by Thomas (2018). Furthermore, this research has enabled a greater understanding of Personal Tutoring from the perceptions of Personal Tutors.

Additionally, it is evident that the Personal Tutor role is multifaceted, and that the role needs to be clearly defined; also the study acknowledges that Personal Tutoring has an impact on both the Personal Tutor and the tutee. There seems to be an implicit expectation that experienced Personal Tutors are the colleagues whom new Personal Tutors turn to for advice and support.

This research emphasises how important it is to support Personal Tutors in an HE institution to perform the role of the Personal Tutor, and the recommendations and model demonstrates a way of how to structure this support for tutors. The support for Personal Tutors should include a one stop resource for information required to do the role and a development and training offer for new Personal Tutors and experienced Personal Tutors. It is clear from my research that the Personal Tutor role makes a difference to the student experience and that it can also be a rewarding role for staff. Furthermore, as the recommendations state, it should be acknowledged that Personal Tutors need to be supported; they need to feel valued, rewarded and recognised for this vital role. While many universities would agree with this, it is not always addressed in institutional priorities, policies, processes and practices (Thomas, 2012).

My research on Personal Tutoring comes at an important and exciting time in HE; as a sector we need to consider the future needs of our students; that said, in recognising this, we also need to consider the needs of Personal Tutors. Indeed, universities are expanding, and fewer resources are being dedicated to Personal Tutoring (Lochtie et al, 2018). To add to this, the diverse backgrounds of today's students mean that the role of the Personal Tutor is more important than ever (Swain, 2008). I believe that, considering the findings, discussion and the above recommendations for this research, suitable strategies and suggestions have been made for institutions to better support their Personal Tutors and in turn provide both a better staff and student experience.

This research has made an impact on me as it has made me realise that Personal Tutoring practice varies across the sector, in institutions, within schools and departments within institutions and in individual programmes. I do believe that a one size approach does not work in terms of when tutorials take place and that in subjects and disciplines there are different needs in supporting students. Staff in particular disciplines know their students' needs and there should be some flexibility in Personal Tutoring practice. However, there needs to be a baseline set by an institution in terms of the Personal Tutor role, expectations and responsibility. My research has fuelled my passion for Personal Tutoring even more and made me realise how important is it to give Personal Tutors a voice. Also, that they need support in the role and that as an Educational Developer I can provide development and training to support tutors to be effective and in turn have a positive impact on the student experience.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – Information Letter

### An Investigation into Personal Tutoring: Staff Perceptions

My name is Dionne Barton; I working as an Educational Developer in the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] at the [REDACTED]. I am a doctoral researcher with the Open University and this study is part of my research for the Doctorate in Education (EdD).

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide on whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

The aim of the study is gain a greater understanding of Personal Tutoring from the perspective of Personal Academic Tutors I would like to find out what staff perceive the role to be and involve.

You have been chosen as a staff member directly involved in personal academic tutoring at the [REDACTED]

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

All information collected will be kept strictly confidential, privacy and anonymity will be ensured in the collection, storage and publication of research material.

Please contact me via email at [d.e.barton@birmingham.ac.uk](mailto:d.e.barton@birmingham.ac.uk) if you have any queries or concerns.

If you do have a complaint or concern then please contact my EdD supervisor Pete Bradshaw at [pete.bradshaw@open.ac.uk](mailto:pete.bradshaw@open.ac.uk)

Thank you for taking the time to take part in an interview.

April 2020

## Appendix 2 – Research Participant Consent Form and Privacy Notice Information

### An Investigation into Personal Tutoring: Staff Perceptions - Interview

Name of Researcher: Dionne Barton

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study (April/May 2020) and what my contribution will be.

Yes/No

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions.

Yes/No

I agree to take part in the interview.

Yes/No

**I agree to take part in further interviews if necessary**

**Yes/No**

**Yes/No**

### Privacy Notice

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the research before the data has been collected (April 2020) without giving any reason.

Yes/No

I understand that I can request data collected to be withdrawn in writing within one month (May/June 2020) of it being collected.

Yes/No

I understand that once the data has been analysed and disseminated I cannot request the data to be withdrawn.

Yes/No

You have the right to lodge a complaint Information Commissioners Office if you have any concerns concerning data protection - <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/>

The lawful basis for processing is public task, processing is necessary for a task carried out in the public interest.

In line with the Open University's Retention Schedule, the research data will be kept for ten years after the completion of the project. The data will be reviewed to establish whether it is still of value, and if the data is of no further value, it will be destroyed.

I agree to take part in the above study.

Yes/No

If you would like a written debrief which consists of a summary of the research please  
circle **Yes/No**

Name of participant

.....

Signature

.....

Date .....

Dionne Barton: [d.e.barton@birmingham.ac.uk](mailto:d.e.barton@birmingham.ac.uk)

## **Appendix 3 – Writing Research Project Protocol**

### **Research Project Proposal – An Investigation into Personal Tutoring; Staff Perceptions**

#### **Project identification and rationale**

I would like to explore the role of the Personal Tutor, how it is defined and perceived. I want to investigate staff who are Personal Tutors, their perceptions and thoughts about Personal Tutoring, in terms of what they perceive the role of a Personal Tutor to be and what they think Personal Tutoring should look like. Also I want to identify what support tutors need in this role in terms of training and development. I want to explore the varied attitudes to Personal Tutoring.

Research questions:

- What are staff perspectives of Personal Tutoring?
- What professional development and support do staff have for Personal Tutoring?

There is a variance in tutoring practice across the university. The need for support is growing each year because of the changing landscape of Higher Education (HE) (Ghenghesh, 2018). There are pressures on Personal Tutoring and set against this are the benefits of greater interaction and engagement to support students.

There has been little scholarly research undertaken about Personal Tutoring, Thomas (2018: xi) states Personal Tutoring research 'is something of an academic research desert'. Students and staff have different experiences of Personal Tutoring.

The role and responsibilities of the Personal Tutor have changed over time (Grant, 2006). There is general consensus in exploring the literature that the role is about supporting students. The concept of the Personal Tutor is often poorly defined (Braine and Parnell, 2011).

New primary research is required to find out the perceptions of staff and if there is a training and/or development need for Personal Tutors. Personal Tutoring is seen as a valued role to student support in order to maximise achievement and minimise attrition (Braine and Parnell, 2011) which is a positive. However, Personal Tutors feel they have a lack of time allowed for the role and feel overloaded with work (Barlow and Antoniou, 2007). They also state that new tutors feel guilty about not giving students necessary support.

The research will be conducted in the university I am working at. The sample for the main study will be six personal academic tutors

## **Project personnel and collaborators**

Principal Investigator: Dionne Barton, [d.e.barton@bham.ac.uk](mailto:d.e.barton@bham.ac.uk)

## **Research Protocol**

### *Literature review*

Watts (2011) highlighted that in developing tutors' confidence and competence in Personal Tutoring, the tutors' lack of supervision, support and training when dealing with intense personal issues was a challenge as well as recognising the importance of boundary setting. The diversity of students and the complex support needs of students is a challenge for Personal Tutors, Stephen et al (2008) identified that tutors felt anxiety when responding to the personal needs of students. Personal Tutors may lack the necessary knowledge and skills to support students, it is important for Personal Tutors to understand their role and those of the support services (Ghenghesh, 2018).

McFarlane (2017) found that gaps in the support and guidance for tutoring including no training or initial guidance was an issue for some tutors. In this study training was mentioned by most tutors as a strategy in moving forward with Personal Tutoring. The value of continuous updating maybe something annual was suggested. A lack of training of tutors was a key factor issue highlighted in Owen's (2000) research.

Students and tutors perceptions of the role and responsibilities are not always in agreement (Coyle-Rogers and Cramer, 2005). Boundaries and expectations of the role need to be made clear (Earwaker, 1992). Thomas (2006) highlights the difficult of the Personal Tutor role for new staff, Earwaker (1992) goes on further and states that if the role is given to the least experienced members of staff difficulties are increased and comments on the fact that there is little, if any, training provided. Tutors need to be prepared for their role and with a clear expectation of their roles and responsibilities (Ross, Head, King, Perry and Smith, 2014).

### *Methodology*

A qualitative research methodology will be adopted in order to focus on meanings and descriptions through first personal accounts. An aim of the research is to capture staff perspectives regarding the opportunities and challenges of Personal Tutoring and to discover and investigate models of practice. The topic of Personal Tutoring requires a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings. Therefore, a phenomenological design will be selected as the appropriate study design to explore the views of participants within the broad framework of a qualitative research paradigm.

The ontological view within the research is interpretivist, which focuses on the reality as relative and subject to interpretation of individuals (Punch and Oanea, 2014). Knowledge is socially constructed; research often investigates people's perceptions. The design of the study is informed by the social constructivist position from which learners view and interpret new information and experiences through their existing network of knowledge, experiences and beliefs (Denscombe, 2010).

Interviews will be used as research tools/instruments.

### *Participants*

As the study adopts a phenomenological approach, the approach lends itself to using a smaller sample size therefore it was decided to use a purposive sampling strategy. A purposive sample is a non-probability sample that is selected on the characteristics of a population and the objective of study (Denscombe, 2017). A non-probability sampling is when the researcher chooses a sample of participants from a population, knowing that it does not represent the wider population (Etikan, Abubakar and Alkassim, 2016). A purposive sample strategy assumes that to explain real phenomena rather than an abstract view of experiences it requires direct engagement between theory and empirical accounts therefore supporting the phenomenological approach (Emmel, 2013).

### *Data Storage and Protection*

In line with the Open University's Retention Schedule, the research data will be kept for ten years after the completion of the project. The data will be reviewed to establish whether it is still of value, and if the data is of no further value, it will be destroyed.

The BERA (2018) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research will be followed. In collecting data from students and staff the following considerations will be applied:

- Pseudonyms will be used to protect participants' identity and to anonymise the data collected
- Appropriate records will be kept and maintained for the purpose of data analysis
- Appropriate storage of records and data will be maintained (this will be kept on an encrypted memory stick)

### *Project Timetable*

Year 2 2020	Activity
January	21/1 Work in progress 05.

	To send to OU ethics a copy of my original ethics application highlighting changes for the main study. Complete the Information Assess Register form (IAR). Write a few key questions for the interviews.
February	Email Personal Academic Tutors in the School of Engineering to ask for volunteers for the study and then identify 6 participants. Begin to revamp methodology for work in progress 06.
March	Undertake the first interviews. Continue working on methodology.
April	Analysis data. Write up the findings.
May	Undertake further interviews if needed. Finish methodology. 28/5 Work in progress 06 – Methodology.
June	Write up the findings and data analysis 30/6 Work in progress 07 – Data analysis and findings
July	25/7 End of year 2 report form

The BERA (2018) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research will be followed. In collecting data from students and staff the following considerations will be applied:

- Participants will be provided with full details of the objectives of the research (appropriate information will be provided for those who first language is not English)
- Participation of participants will be voluntary, with informed, written consent obtained to use the information provided
- Participants will be provided with a de-briefing sheet at commencement of the study
- All research participants will be able to have access to the completed thesis and research findings

### **Research Benefits**

I am hoping that the research will result in a recommendation on how so support staff in their role as a Personal Tutor and influence policy and practice that will benefit both staff and students at the University of Birmingham. The audience for my research is institutions and staff involved in student support, the study is



looking at the Higher Education context but the findings could be relevant for other educational sectors e.g. Further Education.

The research will hopefully benefit institutions, staff and students. I would like to publish my findings

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## Appendix 4 – Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Project Registration and Risk Checklist

### Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Project Registration and Risk Checklist

Please complete and return this form if you are planning a research project involving human participants, including data and/or biological samples so the HREC Chair can assess the necessary level of ethics review. Please include any related documents - e.g. a questionnaire, consent form, participant information sheet, publicity leaflet and/or a draft bid or outline. FAQs offering advice and guidance are available on the [Research Ethics website](#).

Please assess your research using the questions in section 4 and select 'yes/no' as appropriate. If there is and if there is **any possibility of risk** please tick yes. NB. If you tick "yes" to any of the higher risk questions, e.g. 1-4, 7 or 9, then you should go straight to the [full HREC application](#). If it is not clear or even if you have selected mainly 'no's, you should still return a completed checklist to [Research-REC-Review@open.ac.uk](mailto:Research-REC-Review@open.ac.uk) to ensure your research proposal is assessed and recorded by the HREC.

Assessment of checklists takes up to 7 working days, so please indicate if you require a more urgent decision. A [full HREC review](#) can take up to a month, therefore when planning your research and ethics application you need to build in sufficient time to avoid any delays. Particularly when you are planning overseas travel or interviews with participants. It is essential that no potential participants should be approached until you have received a response on whether a [full HREC review](#) will be required. NB. The titles of all research projects considered by the HREC (whether by HREC checklist or application form), will be added to the Research Ethics website - <http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/human-research>. Please note that it is the responsibility of all OU staff to follow appropriate academic or professional guidelines. In particular, the Open University's **Code of Practice for Research** and the **Ethics Principles for Research involving Human Participants** which can be found on the Research Ethics website - [www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics](http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics)

### Section 1: Project Details

Project title	An Investigation into Personal Tutoring: Staff Perceptions		
Project summary (100 words maximum)	An exploration of the role of Personal Tutor, how it is defined and how it is perceived. I want to interview and potentially re-interview with staff to find out their perceptions and thoughts about Personal Tutoring. Also I would like to find out if staff would like support for the role of Personal Tutoring.		
Is your research part of a previous or current application for external funding?		If yes, please provide name of funder and/or the <a href="#">Award Management System</a> (AMS) reference number.	Funding body: AMS ref:

Earliest date participants will be contacted: December 2018	Research project start/end dates: From: March 2020 To: July 2020
Principal Investigators should discuss any project related risks with their department and will need to ensure that all the appropriate checks and permissions are in place prior to a research project commencing, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Student Research Project Panel</u> – research involving OU students or student data</li> <li>• <u>Staff Survey Project Panel</u> – research involving staff and/or staff data</li> </ul>	

## Section 2: Principal Investigator

Name of Primary Investigator (or research student)	Dionne Barton	Status	Doctoral Researcher
Email	<a href="mailto:d.e.barton@bham.ac.uk">d.e.barton@bham.ac.uk</a>	Academic unit/dept.	
Telephone	0121 414 7917	Other researcher(s)	
Date	15/11/18		

## Section 3: For Research degree students only

NB. Applications without a supervisor's signature or supporting comments cannot be considered so please include to avoid any delay ([link to the directly registered research student ethics application process](#)):

Select your postgraduate research degree from the drop-down list.	EdD	Supervisor's name	Pete Bradshaw
Supervisor's electronic signature (preferably primary supervisor)		Supervisor's email	<a href="mailto:pete.bradshaw@open.ac.uk">pete.bradshaw@open.ac.uk</a>
Supervisor's supporting comments I support this application, which is for a small-scale phenomenological study of tutors in a university. The accompanying information provides adequate information on the project, I believe. The candidate has made significant progress with ensuring access to the participants at her university. Ethics clearance at her home institution has been looked into and they will allow her to use the OU forms and clearance as a proxy for their own.			

## Section 4: Risk Checklist

Please assess your research using the following questions and select 'yes' or 'no' as appropriate. If there is any possibility of risk please tick yes. Even if your list contains all 'no's you should still return your completed checklist to [Research-REC-Review@open.ac.uk](mailto:Research-REC-Review@open.ac.uk) to ensure your proposed research is assessed and recorded by the HREC.

Please indicate Yes/No		
1	Does the study involve children (under 16 years old), or those aged 16 and over who are unable to give informed consent. E.g. participants who are potentially vulnerable, such as people with learning disabilities, those with cognitive impairment, or those in unequal relationships, e.g. your own students?	No
2	Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited? (e.g. students at school, members of a self-help group, residents of a nursing home)	No
3	Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time? (e.g. covert observation of people in non-public places)	No
4	Will the study involve discussion of sensitive topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use, or politics)?	No
5	Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to be administered to the study participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?	No
6	Will the research involve the sharing of data or confidential information beyond the initial consent given?	No
7	Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study?	No
8	Will the research involve administrative or secure data that requires permission from the appropriate authorities before use?	/No
9	Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?	No
10	Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?	No
11	Will the research take place outside the UK?	No
12	Does the research involve members of the public in a research capacity (participant research)?	No
13	Is there a possibility that the safety of the researcher may be in question? (e.g. in international research: locally employed research assistants)	No
14	Will financial recompense (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?	No
15	Will the research involve participants responding via the internet or other visual/vocal methods where participants may be identified?	/No
16	Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS or the use of NHS data?	No
17	Will tissue samples (including blood) or other human biological samples be obtained from participants or another source?	No

18	Does your research include consideration of extremism or terrorism related issues? If yes, please complete the Extremism and Terrorism-related registration which can be found at the following link - <a href="http://www.open.ac.uk/research/about/research-ethics/extremism-and-terrorism-related-research">http://www.open.ac.uk/research/about/research-ethics/extremism-and-terrorism-related-research</a>	No
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If you answered 'yes' to questions **16** or **17**, you may have to submit an application to the Health Research Authority (HRA) Research Ethics Service, see [FAQ 3](#) for guidance.

## Section 5: Supporting documents

Where relevant, please include as attachments or appendices, any documents related to your research proposal e.g. participant information sheets and consent forms. The HREC Chair needs as much information as possible in order to make a full assessment of your research proposal. Guidance can be found in FAQ 14 and FAQ 15 on the [Research Ethics website](#).

Please tick or provide a list below, for example:

Consent form and information sheet (these can be separate or a combined document)	✓
Interview questions	✓
Draft bid or project outline	✓
Publicity leaflet	

## Research ethics applications - collection and use of data

To meet internal governance and highlight OU research, the titles of all projects considered by the HREC (either by HREC checklist or proforma) with HREC reference number, Faculty/dept. and HREC decision date, will be added to the Research Ethics website - <http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/human-research>.

Information provided as part of a research ethics application, e.g. from research students or staff, is stored so the HREC has an accurate record. All data is managed and held securely by the [Research Ethics Administrative Team](#) and only shared with HREC members as part of the research ethics review process. Occasionally, and only where relevant, applications are discussed with like OU research review panels, e.g. the Staff Survey Project Panel (SRPP) and Staff Survey Project Panel (SSPP), predominately to avoid delays where applications are being made in tandem.

If, as part of a research ethics application sensitive personal data is disclosed, it will be stored securely and only shared as above. If such data is volunteered but then needs to be withdrawn, the researcher should contact [Research-REC-Review@open.ac.uk](mailto:Research-REC-Review@open.ac.uk). More information is available in the OU [Student privacy notice](#) and [Staff, workers and applicants privacy notice](#).

## **Appendix 5 – Interview Questions, First Round**

### Staff Perspectives of Personal Tutoring/Experiences

1. How long have you been a Personal Tutor? At [REDACTED] or other?
2. What do you think the role of the PT is?
3. What are your experiences of Personal Tutoring? How do you feel about doing the role?
4. How does tutoring work? In terms of group tutorials? Do you have a tutee for the duration of their course?
5. How do you find out the information you need? What are the resources available to you? What do you think would help with this?

### Professional Development and Support

1. Did you receive any induction/training for the Personal Tutor role? If yes, what was it, if no, what do you think you should have? What should it look like?
2. Do you receive any ongoing or regular support for the role? How are you supported?
3. How confident do you feel in doing the role on a scale of 1-10?
4. What knowledge, skills and/or values do you feel are required to be a Personal Tutor?
5. How do you think the institution could/should support you as a Personal Tutor?

### Reward and recognition

1. Do you feel that there is reward and recognition for the role? How?
2. What could reward and recognition look like?

## **Appendix 6 – Interview Questions, Second Round**

### Staff Perspectives of Personal Tutoring/Experiences

1. What do you think the purpose of Personal Tutoring is?
2. What do you perceive is the impact of Personal Tutoring on the student experience?
3. What do you perceive to be the benefits of the role?
4. What are your thoughts of the time it takes to do the Personal Tutor role?
5. How did you feel when you started the role of Personal Tutor?

### Professional Development and Support

1. How have you been able to support your tutees in creating a sense of belonging/community?
2. A challenge in the previous interviews for tutors was setting boundaries and expectations. Have you experienced this?
3. A lack of induction was mentioned in first interviews. Do you think tutors not having an induction affects their ability to do the role?
4. Do you think it would be useful for Personal Tutors to have development/training on supporting tutees with personal issues?
5. How do you cater for the diverse needs of your students? Do you feel there is a need for development/training?
6. Are you aware of UKAT, the Personal Tutoring association?
7. UKAT have a professional recognition scheme for Personal Tutoring, is this something you would be interested in?

### Reward and recognition

1. When asked about reward and recognition in the first interviews the following suggestions were made:
  - The role should be recognised as part of promotion criteria
  - The role should be recognised as part of workload allocation and planning
  - A recommendation of the role being part of the annual personal development review (PDR) appraisal process. Do you agree/disagree? Anything to add?
2. What are your thoughts of comparing Personal Tutoring to teaching and having the same recognition?



## Appendix 7 – Information Asset Register Entry Form



### Information Asset Register entry form

Please contact your [Information Governance Liaison Officer](#) for assistance in entering details of the data you are collecting or using onto the Information Asset Register. You may wish to use this form to draft your entry.

If you are processing personal data, you need to ensure

- Your activity adheres to the **data protection principles**
- You are able to comply with individuals' requests to exercise their **rights as data subjects**

See the end of this form for a summary of these.

For research and scholarship projects, please see the [Research guidance](#). This details some exemptions to data subject rights in certain circumstances

[EdD An Investigation into Personal Tutoring: Staff Perceptions]

<b>Team/ Owner</b>
Dionne Barton
<b>What is the purpose/ function the data is used for?</b> 2-3 words indicating the high level purpose of the data e.g. Payroll, Research, Student Exam Administration. Add the activity/ project title if necessary
Research
<b>Description of the purpose/ function.</b> Brief description of the purpose of processing
For the EdD main study
<b>Where/ how will information be stored?</b> What systems will be used (e.g. OU systems, external systems, or systems to be procured; include email and paper, if these are likely to be used.
On an encrypted USB memory stick
<b>Notes on the data and how it is stored</b>
[An “ <b>additional location information</b> ” field exists on the register at the moment as data was transferred from previous spreadsheets. This shouldn't be necessary for new entries]
<b>Who has edit access to the data?</b> In principle, which teams/ roles?. If you send it to other areas of the OU, see the later question on this

Dionne Barton
<b>Who has read access to the data?</b> <i>In principle, which teams/ roles?.</i>
Dionne Barton
<b>What are the retention periods?</b> <i>What is your retention period? Have you identified a trigger after which you can destroy the data, or start calculating its destruction date? See the <a href="#">retention schedule</a> for examples. You could anonymise the data instead of deleting it - but this means it is not possible to ever re-link the data back to the individual, even by using other data you have access to.</i>
In line with the Open University's Retention Schedule, the research data will be kept for ten years after the completion of the project. The data will be reviewed to establish whether it is still of value, and if the data is of no further value, it will be destroyed.
<b>Information security classification</b> <i>[all personal data is Highly Confidential]</i>
Medium
<b>What is the source of the data?</b> <i>Describe where you get the data from – e.g. direct from the data subject, extracted from another OU system, or from a third party</i>
Participants
<b>Any other compliance requirements?</b> <i>Eg HESA, Health and Safety regulations, financial regulations</i>
N/A
<b>Categories of individual –</b> <i>who are the data subjects? Students/ enquirers/ staff members/ applicants/ research subjects etc</i>
Staff members at University of Birmingham
<b>categories of personal data?</b> <i>What kind of data are you using? (name, contact details, opinions, financial, education, work related, personal life etc.)</i>
Opinions
<b>Link to relevant privacy notice</b> <i>[or research participant information sheet] You have to provide specific information about what you are doing with personal data at the point that you collect it – often in a privacy notice. One of the main OU notices may cover your activity, or you might need to create a specific privacy notice. See <a href="#">guidance on privacy notices</a></i>
I have submitted a research participant information sheet
<b>Lawful basis for processing</b> <i>[Legitimate interest/ public task/ contract/ legal obligation/ consent/ vital interest] - Use the <a href="#">lawful basis for processing help document</a> to identify the correct one. You may want to contact your IGLO or the information rights team for help</i>
N/A
<b>Lawful basis notes:</b> <i>If using consent, does your consent meet the standards required? (<a href="#">ICO guidance</a>) describe how you will manage consent records, and how people can withdraw consent. If using legitimate interest – what is your legitimate interest? How does this balance against the individual's rights and freedoms? How do you minimise impact on them?</i>
The research participant consent form contains this information.

<b>Categories of sensitive personal data</b> <i>Does it include special category or criminal offence data? -religious belief, political opinion, health – including disability and mental health, sex life, trade union membership, genetic or biometric data</i>
N/A
<b>Condition for processing special category personal data</b> <i>If applicable –see <a href="#">guidance</a> for choosing the correct condition. The Information Rights team can help if you are unsure.</i>
N/A
<b>Do you send the data to anyone else within the OU?</b> - internal data flows
N/A
<b>What security measures are in place?</b> <i>To protect against unauthorised access, use or destruction., relating to confidentiality, integrity and availability. Include links to IT information if helpful regarding access controls, backup etc. Will staff require specific training?</i>
N/A
<b>Will you be sharing data with anyone external to the OU?</b> <i>If you are using a supplier/ contractor/ consultant, you need an appropriate contract in place, signed by an authorised OU signatory. If you are sharing with a partner, you need a contract or data sharing agreement. See <a href="https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/key-definitions/controllers-and-processors/">https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/key-definitions/controllers-and-processors/</a></i>
No
<b>Lawful basis for transferring the data</b> <i>[Legitimate interest/ public task/ contract/ legal obligation/ consent/ vital interest] - Use the <a href="#">lawful basis for processing help document</a> to identify the correct one. For using a third party supplier, it's likely to be in our legitimate interest (to operate cost effective and efficient services/ activities)</i>
N/A
<b>Where will the processing take place?</b> <i>If using subcontractors or sharing with other organisations, where are they based? Will data be stored on servers in countries outside the UK? Where are the data subjects?</i>
In the UK by myself.
<b>How do you propose to safeguard any international transfers outside the EEA?</b> <i>E.g model contract clauses, use of PrivacyShield. See <a href="#">Information Commissioner's Office guidance</a>, or contact <a href="mailto:data-protection@open.ac.uk">data-protection@open.ac.uk</a></i>
N/A
<b>Any automated decision making?</b> <i>Any decisions made without any human intervention? E.g Computer marked assignments, loan applications, eligibility for funding or support. Also any profiling – identifying characteristics of certain people in order to take particular actions, e.g. send them specific communications.</i>
N/A
<b>Any children's data?</b> <i>Any personal data relating to children under 16?</i>
N/A

## Appendix: Data Protection Principles and Data Subject Rights

### 1. Lawful, fair and transparent processing

- You must have a lawful basis for collecting and using personal data. See [an overview of lawful bases at the OU](#), using the data must be **necessary** for the purpose (no real alternative) and you must tell people what you are doing

### 2. Purpose limitation

- You must only use personal data for the activities specified in the privacy notice.
- If you want to do anything extra, you will need to tell people first (apart from in specific situations)
- You should put measures in place to minimise the possibility of data being used for other purposes, e.g. “[pseudonymisation](#)” or strict security

### 3. Data minimisation

- You must only collect personal data that you need to carry out these activities – It must be adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary

### 4. Accuracy

- Make sure that the data you collect and use is accurate, and, where necessary, kept up to date so it is fit for purpose.

### 5. Limitation of storage

- You must not store personal data in a form that permits identification for any longer than you need to
- Delete personal data when you no longer need it, in line with the retention schedule. Your team or unit should have a process in place to regularly delete data
- You could, instead, “anonymise” data – so that it can **never** be linked back to the individual (“re-identified”)
- You must avoid storing copies and duplicates. Having many copies of the same data in multiple locations (eg email boxes) is a compliance nightmare.
- Good [information management](#) and [email](#) practices help with this

### 6. Integrity and confidentiality (Security)

- Only those who need to use personal data should have access to it
- We must have organisational and technical measures in place to protect personal data from unauthorised access, use and destruction.
- We must protect data against malicious and accidental misuse
- This includes external threats, and protecting against malware/ransomware etc.
- [Information handling guidance](#)

## Data Subject Rights

The following rights apply generally: [See guidance from the Information Commissioner’s Office for more details](#)

The right to be informed	We must provide a privacy notice when we collect the personal data, detailing what we do with it as per GDPR stipulations
The right of access - Subject Access Requests	Individuals are entitled to have access to all the personal data an organisation holds about them (although there are some limited exemptions).
The right to restrict processing	Individuals can request us to 'block' or suppress the processing of their personal data, temporarily or permanently, if they have a valid reason. For example, someone may prefer that we restrict data rather than deleting it, or ask us to restrict data where they are disputing its accuracy.
The right to rectification	Individuals are entitled to request us to rectify personal data if it is inaccurate or incomplete; including data being processed by third parties on our behalf
The right not to be subject to automated decision-making	Individuals are entitled to request their personal data is not used for profiling activities where a potentially damaging decision with a legal or similarly significant effect is taken without human intervention. This type of automated decision making can only take place under contract, consent or if authorised by law.

The following rights will apply in certain situations, dependent on the legal basis for the processing that has been identified:

The right to data portability	Individuals are entitled to a copy of their personal data in a format which can be transferred easily to another IT system, e.g. in another organisation.	Relevant legal bases: Consent and contract
The right to object	Individuals are entitled to object to the processing of their personal data based on legitimate interests or the performance of a task in the public interest/ direct marketing; and we should stop using the data.  If this right applies, you must tell data subjects explicitly on the first communication with them, eg that they can opt out.	Relevant legal bases: Public task/ legitimate interest,
The right to erasure	Individuals are entitled to request the deletion or removal of their personal data where there is no compelling reason for its continued processing.	Relevant legal bases: Consent, contract, legitimate interest, and vital interest
The right to withdraw consent	Individuals are entitled to withdraw consent at any time	Relevant legal bases: Consent

Data subjects are also able to claim compensation for damage and distress caused by breaches.

## Appendix 8 – Transcript with Data Analysis Step 2 and 3

Interviewee C – part 2

Emergent Themes	Original Transcript	Exploratory Comments
Monitoring the student - a relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What do you think the purpose of Personal Tutoring is?</li> </ul> <p>OK. So what's the purpose? The purpose I think is obviously a point of contact with the students from the university perspective. Another way of monitoring so the surveillance is the surveillance role. I think from the student's point of view, the Personal Tutoring is just to</p>	Point of contact. <i>Monitoring/Surveillance</i> <u>Implies a procedural purpose and a point of contact – a relationship?</u>
Sense of belonging	<p>is, to, is quite important. It's about wanting them to feel connected to the university and inspire confidence in them that's what I think it's there to make them feel wanted. And loved, kinda loved. To make them feel appreciated and feel like they are not alone. So if you always think there's somebody's got your back. And if they think there's somebody on the academic staff who's got their back they might feel better and more confident. I suppose that's what I think it's about.</p>	Feel connected to the uni, inspire confidence, feel wanted, loved and appreciate – not alone <i>Uses the word love twice</i>
A relationship – personal development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What do you perceive is the impact of Personal Tutoring on the student experience?</li> </ul> <p>The impact on the students is to I was going to say that there is an aspect of accountability. So it increases the feeling of accountability that they may have provided, by providing an additional bit of structure to them and how they interact with the university.</p>	<u>Is about a sense of belonging? Part of a community</u> Someone there. <i>Mentions 'got their back twice'</i> <u>To care?</u> <u>Personal development - a relationship</u>
Accountability and make the students more responsible	<p>Yeah, I think it's accountability. It's it's it's light touch accountability, isn't it?</p> <p>So I would say that that staff that's what it that's what is the impact on students is to make them feel more accountable for what they do.</p>	Accountability. <i>Mentions accountability 4 times.</i> <u>Interviewee sees the impact as responsibility.</u>

	<p>The literature talks a lot about student retention and actually Personal Tutoring can help with that. Do you think that?</p> <p>Well, absolutely, yes. I mean, the retention comes from giving people meaning and purpose. The sense of meaning and purpose and that the idea of being accountable and having a friendly person contributes to that.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your thoughts of the time it takes to do the Personal Tutor role?</li> </ul>	
Student retention	<p>The time itself is not a big deal. I mean, it's it's half an hour, isn't it? It's just a week at the moment and it is even less actually during term if you're not organised.</p> <p>It can be a burden. My view of it is. It is this, it is the switching, the task switching which is the think, that's the issue is not the time.</p>	<p>Retention – meaning and purpose, a friendly face <i>Friendly</i> <u>Indicates that can help with retention if tutor is friendly</u></p>
Workload and time	<p>It's the fact that you've got to switch from doing something else to doing this. But you could say that about lots of activities, but it's another thing you've got to switch to do to disrupt an academic endeavour, which, as you know, doesn't.</p> <p>Always weigh, doesn't lend themselves to be switched in and out of very quickly, you can spend all day on something. You can't when you've got to do something on this. Yeah. I just. I would say that.</p> <p>I don't think it's it's by far it's not very onerous compared to the things once you got everything scheduled and it flows, it's just to me it's not a big deal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did you feel when you started the role of Personal Tutor?</li> </ul> <p>I remember that. And so probably I was younger. I think I thought it was more. What's the word, yeah. I mean, I can feel that, I</p>	<p><i>Not a big deal.</i> If not organised it can be a burden.</p> <p><i>Issue is not time</i></p> <p><u>Does not see role as a big time constraint</u></p> <p><i>Not onerous. Not a big deal x2</i></p>



Role of Personal Tutor - perceptions	<p>thought I thought it was a deeper role than it actually is. Yeah, that's it.</p> <p>I thought it was more about making a deep connection with students or individual tutees. Whereas I don't really see it like that now.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you support your tutees in creating a sense of belonging/community?</li> </ul> <p>I have suggested tutees create and use a whats app group, in an online tutorial I encourage them to stay on the call and I leave them, I send them to breakout rooms to have a discussion. I mean, I suppose you could possibly if you're talking about a group setting, you could encourage some sort of group activity outside of the session. Yeah, that would be something that could be done. I mean, it's interesting, isn't it, because. This lockdown, I mean, I don't really feel like it used to be kind of one to one sessions it did within our school.</p>	<p>Thought it was more, a deeper role. <i>Deep again</i></p> <p><u>Perception of role has changed</u></p>
Strategies for creating a sense of belonging/community	<p>So you had to you had to set of tutees to see individually for academic reviews, that was it. The academic reviews you do talk to them about, you do do those</p> <p>Academic reviews. Well, I haven't done them this term or thought about them, but it's a more about the group thing this time. It's just than it's ever been.</p> <p>It's more about having this group. I used to when the first years used to come, I used to encourage them to, I think they used to be scared of me because I used to say right the next I see you, I want you to have joined a society.</p> <p>You know, if you have done this at school you should be doing here. They used to come back and almost be apologetic that they hadn't done these classes, I think. Yeah, I think in terms of activities, I think online, online and online activities are good.</p>	<p><u>What app group, stay on call, breakout rooms. <i>Encourage a group activity outside of session. A range of strategies shared to create a sense of belonging/community</i></u></p>

Expectations for students	<p>What would I want that is not being given to us at the moment on Canvas I mean there is that page I have a personal desktop with all my person tutor stuff on. There is that page that says what you can Do to first years, second years and third years. Fourth years, to me, the only thing I would add to that is what questions can you ask when you put them in the breakout rooms. A set of questions that they could discuss. Discussion points, that's what I would add.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A challenge in the previous interviews for tutors was setting boundaries and expectations. Have you experienced this?</li> </ul> <p>I don't think there's that many expectations, no . But I think I think about. I think that's an issue with Personal Tutoring and tutees. I mean, I expect them to be that there is this roll call thing on Canvas, isn't that. I've actually used that. I don't know how it works with the students, <b>But</b> I think they get an immediate report that they've not come because sometimes they e-mail me to apologise.</p> <p>So I suppose that's an expectation, to check attendance. They realise that there's a black mark against them and on the on the um, the system somewhere. So I know I've noticed a few email after to say they couldn't make it because of this, they wouldn't have done that if I hadn't ticked their name.</p> <p>If. In terms of boundaries, that fine expectations I think the online has been a couple, there's a couple of og there's one there was there was one incident which was quite uncomfortable, actually, which was the first year tutor one. And that was early on when people still thought they had to put their cameras. And what I noticed is people put the cameras on if I've got my camera on. They feel compelled to do so. And I</p>	<p><u>Encourage again. Join a society. Does he see the role as being to encourage?</u></p> <p><u>Confirms online activites are good.</u></p> <p><u>Uses questions to create a sense of belonging/community</u></p> <p>No expectations, <i>roll calling</i>.</p> <p><u>Shares the procedural aspect of the role – expectations are set in terms of attendance</u></p> <p>Again, expectation of attendance</p>
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Attendance- procedures	<p>didn't really feel comfortable talking to people in their bedrooms in the university at all because as you said</p> <p>You know there was one particular one. And I just thought have you actually got any clothes on here, you know what I mean, I could see from the shoulders up. I just thought, this is not good I am not doing this again.</p> <p>I mean, you could argue that was a struggle with boundaries because we're talking to people in their bedrooms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lack of induction was mentioned in the first interviews.</li> </ul> <p>Do you think tutors not having an induction affects their ability to do the role?</p>	Cameras and a lack of clothes. <i>Talks about not doing that again – having a camera on and feeling uncomfortable</i>
Blur of boundaries	<p>I think I think the issue is you're an academic tutor and it's quite difficult in most people's minds to separate an academic tutor from the stuff.</p> <p>You know, and I know there's materials already on canvas who say this is the role of the tutor and there's welfare services and etc. But I think that's probably the most the most difficult thing when you are not experienced at it is</p> <p>So that you don't have to go down this particular hole here with this person because is probably</p> <p>best you don't because it's better for the university to talk to them about these things. I think there's a bit of that. I mean, I. I mean, these are quite rare occasions. I think. And I think it's when there's an emotional issue, essentially, if we just put everything under academic.</p> <p>But if there's an emotional problem there a personal problem, you know, some students want to disclose and so what do I do with this information?</p> <p>I'm trying to think of other, I don't think I had any real issues, I can't think of a particular incident, there is sometimes there are</p>	<p><u>Interviewee shares an uncomfortable experience suggesting a blur of boundaries</u></p> <p><u>Difficult. Implies that roles are difficult to separate</u></p> <p>Materials on Canvas</p>

<p>Finding information</p>	<p>things that I do not need to know this and I don't want to know this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you think it would be useful for Personal Tutors to have development/training on supporting tutee's with personal issues?</li> </ul> <p>I think if think about times when it will I mean, not now, not for many years, there are certain times in an academic's career where things get sticky for them they're stressed out. You know, there's lots of issues of employee welfare.</p> <p>So at the University of Birmingham, you know, there are also certain situations people find themselves in and they are probably not a good person for students to talk to. And I think I think that is probably the biggest flaw in Personal Tutor systems that you are putting an academic who is strung out or whatever and got their own issues and they're trying to steady the ship for somebody who's a bit, you know a young vulnerable person themselves, that's where the dodgy area is. So it's the universities making sure that the tutors themselves are on an even keel. And there's so many instances where from other colleagues who, you know, shouldn't really be talking to students in that way because they're not in a good headspace. I think that's the biggest issue, actually, we are talking before Covid here.</p>	<p><u>Difficult- not experienced. Indicates that there are resources to support the role but that new tutors do not know where to go or who to go to.</u></p>
<p>Challenges with emotional needs/issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do you cater for the diverse needs of your students? Do you feel there is a need for development/training?</li> </ul> <p>To be honest with you, sometimes with a particular student has come to me with a problem. I've just said that you just need to go and see student services. It's almost throwing over, I have no idea what student services are going to say to them I just assume there will be something that will deal with a specific issue.</p>	<p><u>Emotional – academic. Suggests that dealing with emotional issues is challenging.</u></p> <p>I do not need to know and I don't want to know this.</p> <p><u>Employee welfare. Sticky and stressed out. This is evidence of support needed for Personal Tutors and highlights that there are challenges</u></p>

Support for Personal Tutors	Like a rent problem or, you know, personal issues. The point is, is that I don't know. All I know is there is this thing called student welfare, I don't know if it is called student welfare services, student services? So perhaps something better student says this you can send them here directly. that would be useful because ultimately it is go and talk to them over there, the Aston Webb building or in failing that go the Guild, they're on your side.	<i>Biggest flaw, strung out, own issues. Vulnerable young person. <u>Demonstrates the complexity of the role and the challenges. Does this highlight a development need?</u></i>
A development and training need - needs of students		
The role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When asked about reward and recognition in the first interviews the following suggestions were made: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The role should be recognised as part of promotion criteria</li> <li>The role should be recognised as part of workload allocation and planning</li> <li>A recommendation of the role being part of the annual personal development review (PDR) appraisal process.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Do you agree/disagree? Anything to add? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not sure. I don't know what would be a good and a bad example of Personal Tutoring and. So, I am not sure about, I don't know what the performance measure be?</li> <li>Yes it should definitely be part of the workload model, it does take up to a couple of hours a week this meetings.</li> <li>I think that's quite good idea. I do think there is no real accountability for what you've done as a Personal Tutor.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<i>Throwing over – see student services. <u>Indicating a signposting role</u></i>
Signposting role	I mean, I suppose you could say accountability is you've completed your tutees academic review. If they don't turn up you say they haven't turned up, it's nothing to do with me. You know, I	<i>No idea of what student services are going to say. <u>Is it called student welfare, student services?</u></i>
Lack of knowledge of student support services		<i><u>Lacking knowledge of student support services</u></i>

Reward and recognition	<p>don't think these stress academics out by by making them to use all their tricks in their boxes to get them, get the students to engage if they're not engaging, because that is not really fair on on the academics.</p> <p>But I mean, the biggest issue in tutoring is actually writing preferences. So they want to go to the next slightly higher esteem institution. And so they start these online applications and then they just keep hassling your for months.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your thoughts of comparing Personal Tutoring to teaching and having the same recognition?</li> </ul> <p>It's completely different. It doesn't require the same amount of preparation, or accountability there is no marking involved. Are you aware of United Kingdom Advising Tutoring (UKAT) as a tutoring association?</p> <p>UKAT have a professional recognition scheme for Personal Tutoring, is this something you would be interested in?</p> <p>I was not aware of UKAT or their professional recognition scheme</p> <p>I will take a look and consider</p>	<p>Not sure. <i>Good or bad?</i> <u>Interviewee is not sure about promotion criteria due to what could be measured</u></p> <p>Yes. <i>Definitely.</i> <u>He confirms that it takes time to do the role</u></p> <p><u>Agrees with PDR as it gives accountability to the role implying it is lacking</u></p>
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The role		<p>Accountability. <u>He thinks that it is not like teaching as it does not involve the same amount of time.</u></p>
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## Appendix 9 – Table of Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

Table of Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

	Superordinate Themes	Subordinate Themes
A	The Personal Tutor role Development and Training Reward and recognition	Relationships Academic and professional support Signposting Induction Specific development sessions Skills sessions
B	The Personal Tutor role Training Reward	Relationships Time consuming Skills sessions
C	The Personal Tutor role Development and support Reward and recognition	Relationships Accountability Signposting Knowledge required for the role Managing boundaries Finding information Needs of students
D	The Personal Tutor role Development and training Reward and recognition	Relationships Pastoral support Impact of the role Workload Skills and attributes for the role



		Induction support Ongoing development – sense of belonging/community and setting boundaries
E	The Personal Tutor role Professional development Reward and recognition	Support Relationships Workload New Personal Tutor support Specific focus development Resources
F	Knowledge for the role Professional Development Reward and recognition	The Personal Tutor role Relationships Information for the role Support for new tutors Professional development sessions Skills required
Final Themes	Information and knowledge required for the Personal Tutor role Professional Development and Training Reward and recognition	The role of the Personal Tutor The tutor-tutee relationship Reward and recognition